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MARCH 1996

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**BY MICHAEL J.
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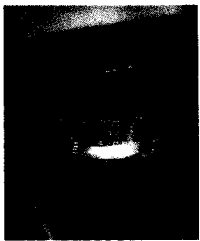
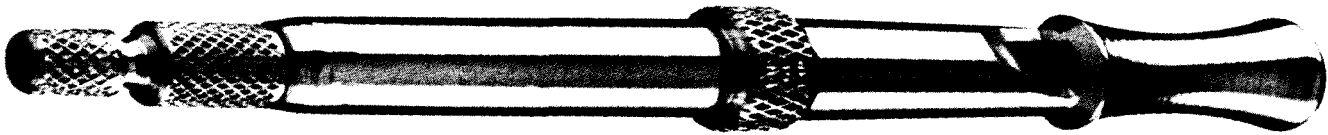
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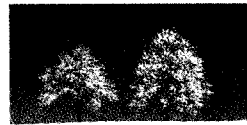


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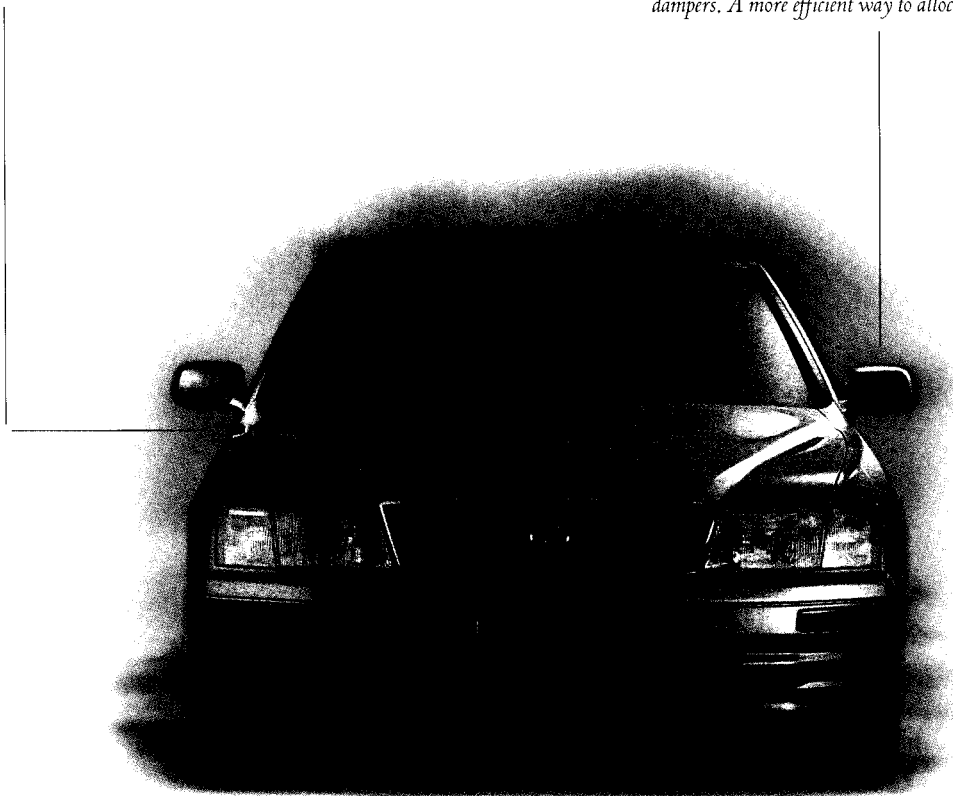
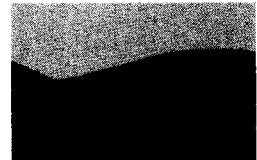
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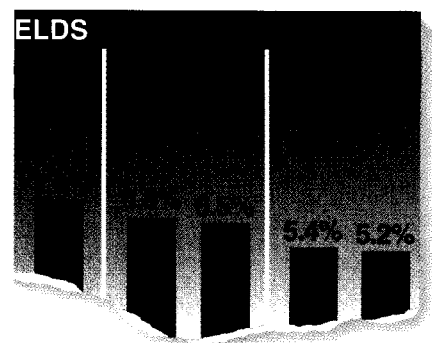
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Grand Marnier, *slightly* less mysterious than the meaning of life.

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745 BOYLSTON STREET

DAVID Schiff, whose music essays have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* for several years, writes with a composer's ear: when he isn't writing, teaching at Reed College, in Portland, Oregon, where his courses touch on all kinds of music, or conducting the Reed undergraduate orchestra, he is composing. His opera *Gimpel the Fool* has been produced six times, and he is at work on concertos for jazz violin and viola.

Schiff is a born New Yorker (he was educated at Columbia, the Manhattan School of Music, and Juilliard), and the city's rhythms appear both in his prose and in his music. So do Jewish themes. This month Schiff shows how Irving Berlin's immersion in American culture helped to transform a Russian Jewish immigrant into the nation's chief anthem maker. His new viola concerto, inspired by klezmer music, is based on a fable of a cantor who leaves nineteenth-century Poland to seek fame and fortune in Western Europe and, to his ultimate destruction, finds it.

Currently Schiff is revising his award-winning book *The Music of Elliott Carter* (1983), examining the works that Carter, under whom Schiff studied, has written since the book was pub-

lished. And he is writing a book on George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. The new book grew out of Schiff's June, 1993, *Atlantic* cover story on Leonard Bernstein. In his research Schiff found that Bernstein bore a grudge against *Rhapsody in Blue*: "He said it was just a collection of tunes, and you could rearrange

it in any order—he accused it of having no musical form." Through imaginative reconstruction based on what he calls "sleuthing," Schiff is composing source material like what Gershwin might have drawn on—his musical trunk of ideas—in order to explain how Gershwin could have composed the piece so "artfully" in a matter of weeks.

"I love writing for the theater," Schiff says, by way of introducing a piece of music he recently and very reluctantly abandoned. This one contained little of New York and nothing Jewish: Schiff and the librettist Stuart Flack imagine a meeting between Wallace Stevens and Charles

Ives on a train back from the 1935 Harvard-Yale game. The two couldn't find anyone to commission it, though: "No sex, no violence, and two middle-aged men as heroes." Schiff seems as adept at straddling cultures as the composers he writes about. We're betting he'll find a taker. —THE EDITORS



STEVEN BLOCH

CONTRIBUTORS

Jack Beatty ("Wages Matter Most") is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.

Henri Cole ("Horses") is at the American Academy in Rome. His most recent book is *The Look of Things* (1995).

James Fallows ("The Java Theory") is *The Atlantic*'s Washington editor. He is the author of *More Like Us* (1989) and *Looking at the Sun* (1994). Fallows's most recent book, *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy*, was published by Pantheon earlier this year.

Ian Frazier ("No Phone, No Pool, No Pets") is a writer of humor and nonfiction. He is the author of *Family* (1994), a memoir, and *Coyote v. Acme*, a collection of humorous essays, to be published in June.

Judith Gingold ("Adventures in Liposuction"), formerly an editor at *Newsweek*, is writing a book titled *On Pins and Needles*, about her efforts to cure her neck pain without neurosurgery.

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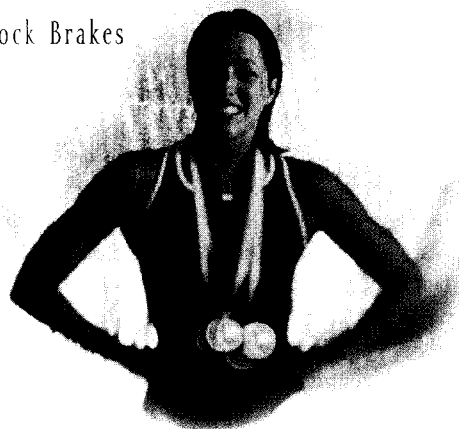
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LETTERS

What Should Children Learn?

Paul Gagnon's "What Should Children Learn?" (December *Atlantic*) is merely the latest bashing of American schools by someone who does not work in them.

Gagnon's reference to "our 25 percent dropout rate" is erroneous. In fact 83 percent of U.S. students graduate on time. Another four percent obtain GEDs, and another four percent return to obtain a diploma after initially dropping out.

And they are not merely being socially promoted on the basis of seat time. Many achievement-test scores are at all-time highs, many trends on the National Assessment of Educational Progress are at all-time highs, the proportion of students scoring above 650 on the math SAT is at an all-time high, and the number of students taking advanced-placement tests has quintupled since 1978. American students finished second among thirty-one nations in a 1992 study of reading skills, and their 90th, 95th, and 99th percentiles were the largest in the world.

Gagnon is at best functioning as a sophist when he says that the Committee of Ten called for a rigorous curriculum "for all high school students *whether or not they were going to college.*" That's true, but the committee knew that in 1894 only seven percent of age-eligible students were even *enrolled* in high school. Gagnon chides Life Adjustment education for being anti-intellectual, but at least its advocates were trying to cope with 100 percent of the population.

Gerald W. Bracey

*Educational Researcher and Writer;
Executive Director,
Alliance for Curriculum Reform
Alexandria, Va.*

The pretense of neutrality undermines Paul Gagnon's case in "What Should Children Learn?" It is precisely the notion of a fixed human nature that historical revisionism rejects. That is why a content-

based history organized around agreed-upon standards is impossible as long as the academy and the educational bureaucracy and unions are under the control of leftists who operate on the assumptions that humanity is infinitely malleable, that there are no "origins," that there are no "essentials of U.S. or world history" (no masterpieces, no authentically seminal events, no heroes, no individuals of global significance outside savage "cults of personality"), that history is written by the winners to legitimize their status in an elitist hierarchy, and that "history has no subject" aside from pure power relations.

Omar Ramo
Venice, Calif.

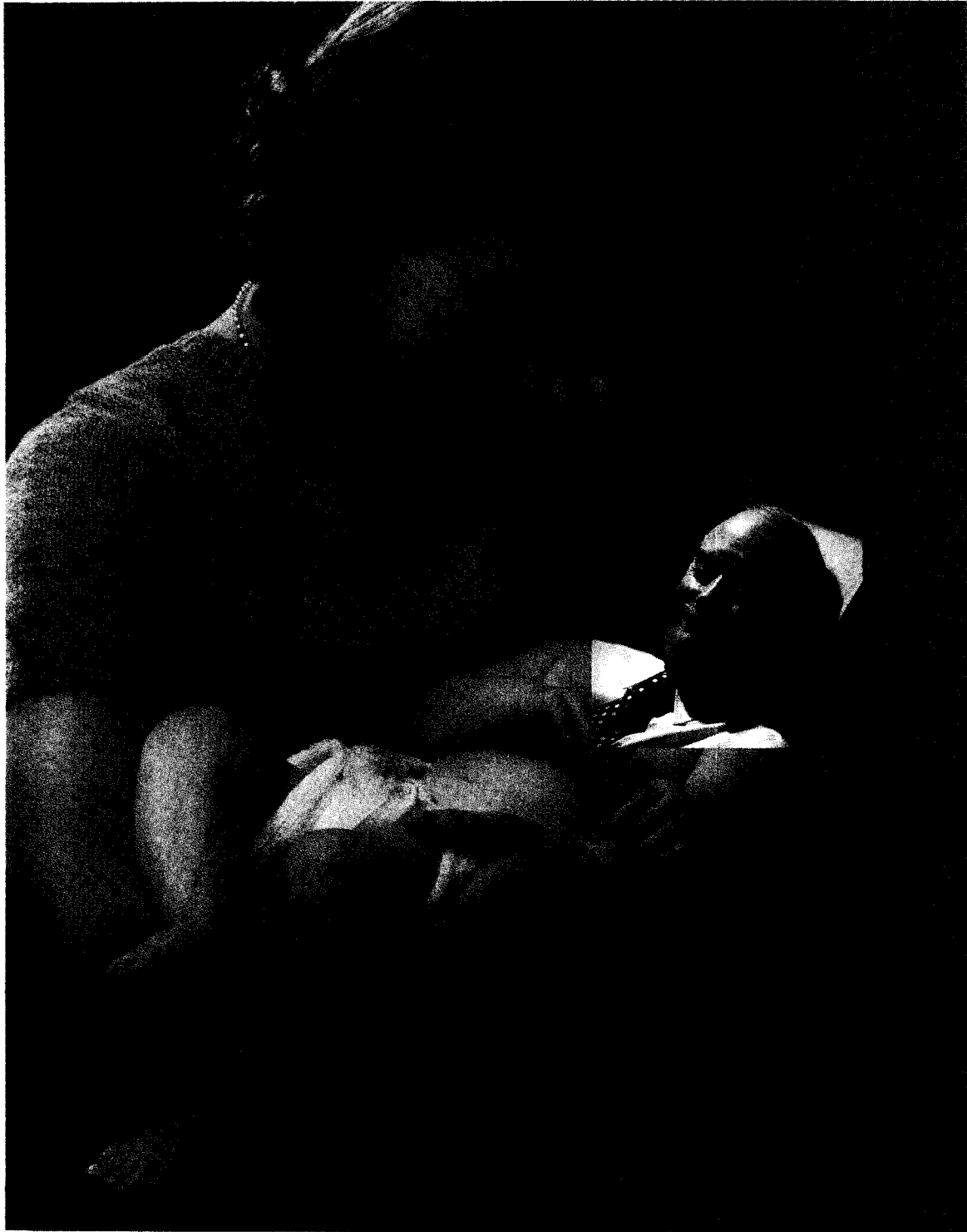
Paul Gagnon's proposal that education reform be returned to the local level because of the failure to develop national standards is faulty from the beginning.

In the first place, he assumes, incorrectly, that the national public education system is controlled by a gargantuan bureaucracy of mindless educators, which he euphemistically refers to as the "educational establishment." In fact education in this country is in the hands of the more than 100,000 lay persons who sit on the autonomous boards of some 16,000 local school districts. The average tenure of superintendents who offer professional leadership to policymaking boards is about seven years—a fact that belies the assumption that educators are in charge.

Public schools in this country are little more than reflections of the quality of life in the communities they serve. Any measure of academic standards applied to students can be highly correlated to a number of economic, cultural, ethnic, and political factors that profile the community where those students attend school. Expecting schools to reform society is like asking a mirror to improve the images it reflects.

Bob D. Whetstone
*Professor of Education
Birmingham-Southern College
Birmingham, Ala.*

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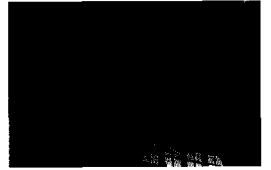
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I could not agree more strongly with Paul Gagnon's argument that the original draft of the history standards (I have not seen the latest revision) placed far too much emphasis on matters not central to the role of a U.S. citizen in the twenty-first century. The history panel was led down the same path of overspecification that brought the arts panel to grief. However, I don't believe that most Americans really wish to have their children read and understand (to mention just a few of Gagnon's examples) "Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu, Burke, Paine, the Federalists and the anti-Federalists" as background for the study of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. I think Debra Wadsworth, in the recent Public Agenda Foundation report, is on the mark when she says that Public Agenda found "a surprising degree of disdain toward highly educated people and some sense of antagonism toward an educational cultural elite." Until public attitudes toward learning change, Wadsworth, Gagnon, and those who write letters to *The Atlantic* are merely talking to ourselves.

Bruce M. Smith
Bloomington, Ind.

Paul Gagnon replies:

Gerald Bracey disputes my 25 percent dropout rate, but the latest figures from the National Center for Education Statistics show that 73.4 percent of the appropriate age group earned high school diplomas in 1994–1995, much like the 73.2 percent of 1990–1991, the year my article cites. The NCES "dropout" rate of only 10.5 percent for 1994–1995 ignores the "institutionalized," those not in households, and those who never start high school at all. The Committee of Ten sought equal and democratic schooling precisely because its members expected a rapid rise in numbers of high school students, well beyond the 1894 percentages. Bob Whetstone says I assign school reform to the local level, but I suggest something very different: *local implementation* of statewide standards.

Sadly, these letters either excuse unequal schools or seem resigned to them because obstacles to change are too much for us. We are to think that Americans, unique in the world, are so beset by awful forces (apathy, taxes, conspiracies, unreformable communities) that we cannot do for our children what others do for theirs.

American exceptionalism—once too prideful—is turned on its head, now to be abject. Happily, most letters from parents and teachers see things differently and say we can do better.

Lead Poisoning

Ellen Ruppel Shell's insinuation that the hazards of lead poisoning have been exaggerated to manipulate public policy to extremist ends is unfounded ("An Element of Doubt," December *Atlantic*).

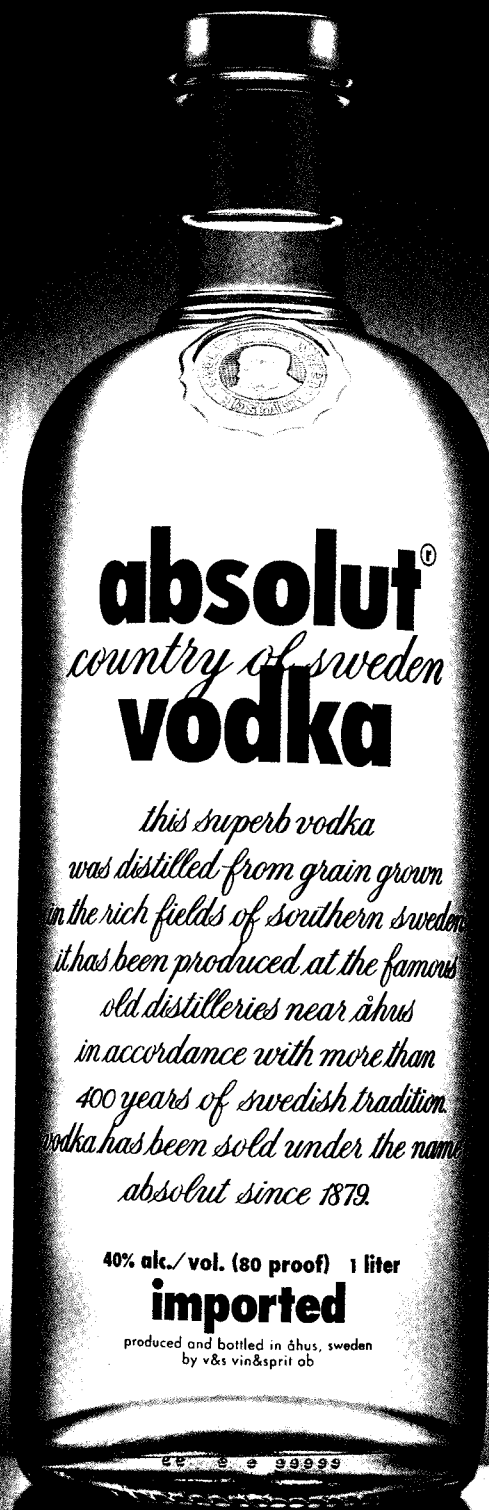
First, the evidence is solid that lead poisoning is a serious public-health problem. Thousands of laboratory, clinical, and population-based studies conclusively document lead's adverse effects. The Bush Administration's decision to reduce the threshold for lead in blood was justified (indeed, necessitated) by the cumulative weight of evidence, including more than a dozen epidemiological studies in the United States and abroad demonstrating that low-level lead poisoning has a debilitating effect on children's intelligence, hearing, attention span, learning, and behavior.

Over the past two decades lead levels have decreased dramatically in the United States, owing to the ban on lead in gasoline. But this impressive public-health achievement is no reason to abandon efforts to protect those children still at risk.

With the active support of public-health advocates, the goal of national policy has been redirected to lead-safe (rather than lead-free) housing. Shell's reading of the 1992 federal law is backwards: rather than promoting "the widespread removal of lead paint," it sanctioned strategies to manage existing lead paint and narrowed the focus to exposure hazards—primarily deteriorating paint and dust. The irony Shell tries to find in my family's living in a home with lead paint demonstrates her ignorance of national consensus recommendations for lead-safe housing.

Don Ryan
*Executive Director, Alliance to End
Childhood Lead Poisoning
Washington, D.C.*

Ellen Shell's article is an ill-informed attack on the scientific basis for one of the most successful public-health programs of this century: the reduction in Americans' lead exposure.



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SCRATCHING ONLY MAKES IT WORSE.

(A JOURNEY THROUGH BOTSWANA'S OKAVANGO DELTA.)

Recently we subjected the new Nissan Pathfinder to one of the toughest test-drives imaginable: a 5,000-mile safari across Africa. Our journey treated us to incredible wildlife, breathtaking landscapes and some of the poorest excuses for roads you can imagine. Over the next few months, we'll share highlights, lowlights, our favorite destinations and survival tips. We may even mention a word or two about the vehicle that took us there and back in one piece. Today's story, as the saying goes, begins in Botswana.

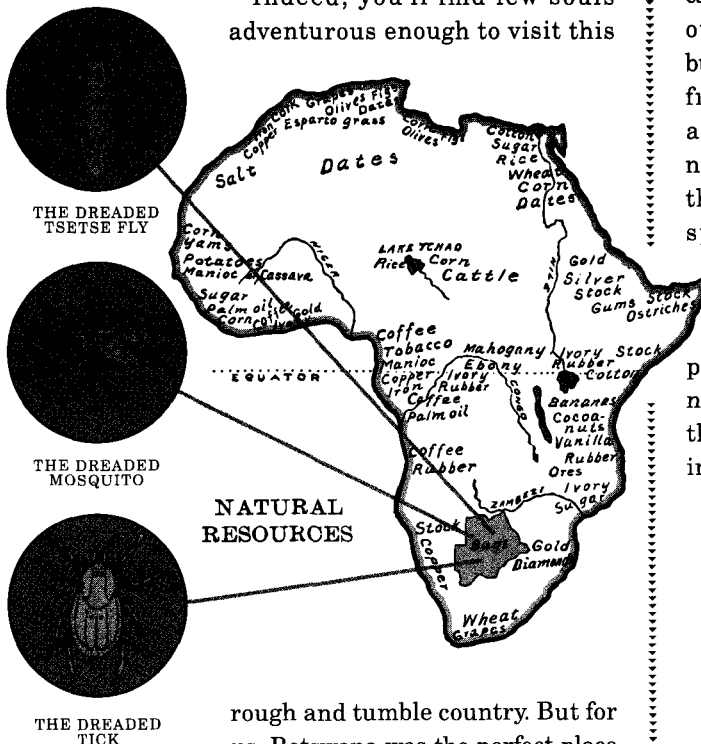
BOTSWANA

WITH OVER 85% of his country covered in sand, scorching temperatures that routinely soar over 115° F, and roads that have never seen an ounce of asphalt, Botswana's Minister of Tourism would seem to have his work cut out for him. Add the ubiquitous mosquitoes and voracious tsetse flies and you'd think he'd quit and find a new job.

Indeed, you'll find few souls adventurous enough to visit this

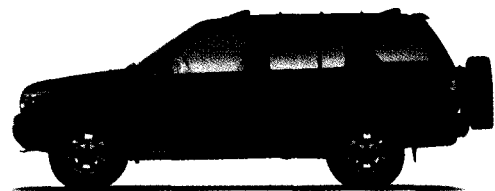
be recompensed by the hundreds of different animal species that inhabit this wildlife oasis. (And, of course, the fact we could set our automatic temperature control on a more humane 72°F.)

Our jumping-off point for the Okavango Delta was a small frontier town called Maun where, as our Pathfinder's built-in compass confirmed, we caught a two-lane road north. It took us only a few minutes to surmise that Botswana's Minister of Transportation must spend most of his time consoling the country's Minister of Tourism, for just two miles out of Maun the tarred road abruptly ends and turns to sand. Indeed, since there is no pavement or gas station or traffic sign or convenience mart for the long, slow 75-mile drive into the delta, we recommend keeping the Pathfinder in 4WD and bringing along a good collection of CD's.



rough and tumble country. But for us, Botswana was the perfect place to prove the mettle of the new Nissan Pathfinder.

We arrived in Botswana on September 30th, which was, auspiciously, "Botswana Day." Our intended destination was the northwest corner of the country, where Angola's Okavango River spills into Botswana's sands and forms the Okavango Delta: the largest inland delta in the world. Here, we were told, temperatures only reached 105° and any discomfort would



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**LOCAL BOTSWANAN
SNACK.**



A common local treat is the Mopani worm. To prepare, cook in hot ash for 15 minutes, boil in salt water, then place in the sun until dry. (Note: Chefs pressed for time can simply serve small pieces of cardboard.)

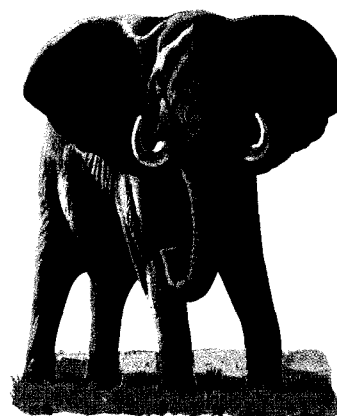
Any curse words uttered in the direction of Botswana's transportation department, however, were quickly retracted as we entered the primordial delta. The terrain, although challenging to man, machine and anti-perspirant, is home to an incredible array of wildlife. On our first day alone, we saw elephants, giraffe, hippos,

zebra, buffalo, wildebeest, gazelle and warthogs—the latter of which (DRIVING ALERT) burrow dens into the ground that put New York potholes to shame.

The following days were spent four-wheeling through the thick sand and soggy marshes that pass for roads in Botswana, and observing the

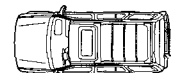
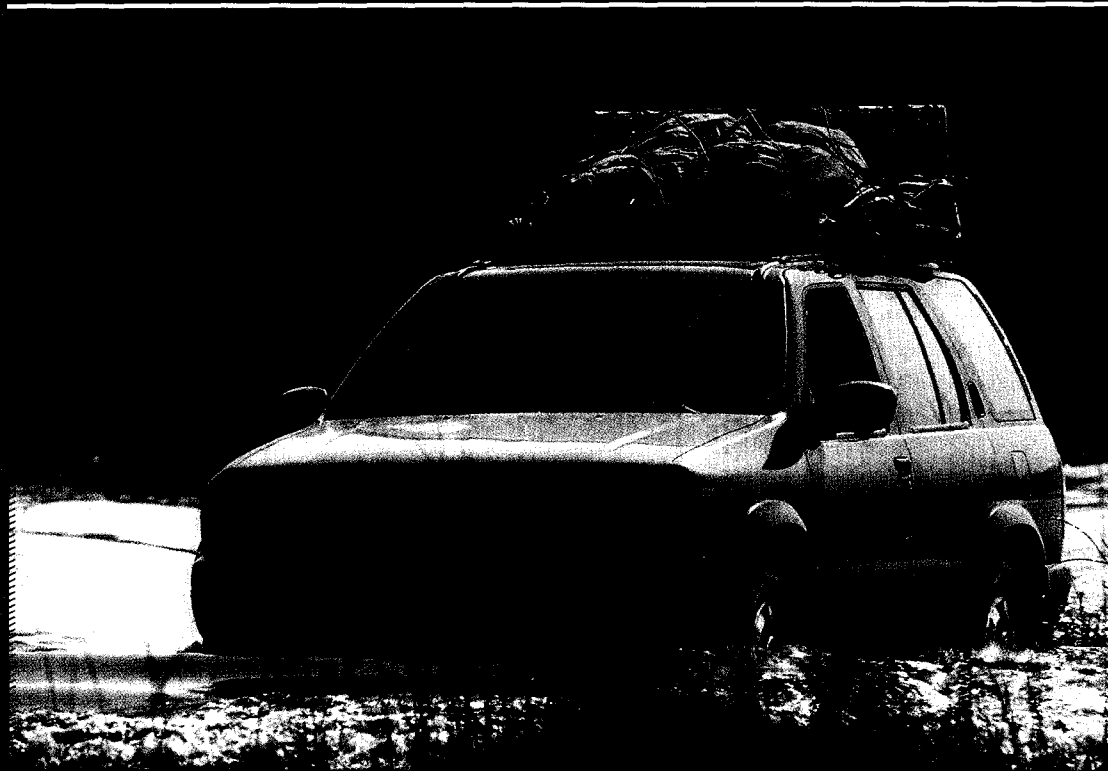
That's a lot of peanuts!)

Leaving the Okavango Delta sweatier, itchier and wiser, we have only the kindest of words for Botswana. Sure, the roads are lousy and the tsetse flies bite hard. But as a break from vacation crowds, few places compare.



SAFARI SAFETY BULLETIN

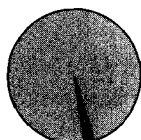
Refrain from using the Pathfinder's horn whilst driving through an elephant herd. The sound is like that of an elephant in distress, and may cause the herd to stampede in your direction. Even though the Pathfinder features chip-resistant paint, this would not be a good thing



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- Percentage of Dirt Roads
- Percentage of Paved Roads

area's elephant herds. We're pleased to report that the Pathfinder's increased horsepower and torque handled the terrain with ease, the newly improved suspension system made mincemeat of the bumps, and, aesthetically speaking, our vehicle looked quite sharp covered in Okavango mud. We should also add, immodestly, that we learned enough trivia about the Family Elephantidae to ensure us a spot on the final round of Jeopardy. (Did you know African elephants eat 16 hours a day?

Pathfinder drivers desiring to visit the Okavango can call their local travel agent or, if phone bills are no object, Botswana's Department of Tourism at 011-267-353024. We're sure the Minister of Tourism would love to hear from you.

. . .

NEXT
STOP:

KENYA!

. . .

THE NEW PATHFINDER



Nissan Motor Corporation
U.S.A.
Always wear seat belts.

Shell gets some big facts wrong. We have not "kicked the lead habit," despite significant controls (some by the voluntary action of private industry) on lead in gasoline, paint, food cans, and plumbing. We are using more lead than ever, according to the U.S. Bureau of Mines. Lead in lead paint, even in large chips and fragments, is unfortunately bioavailable. X-rays have shown large pieces of paint in the stomachs of children who were exposed by chewing and eating flaking paint. The lead in soil often comes from exterior paints as well as from gasoline. However, when lead-based paint is present inside homes, it dominates as the source of lead in household dust. Children's blood lead rarely doubles in the summertime; the fluctuations in blood levels often reflect changes in absorption as well as distribution of lead between blood and bone.

Shell claims that no study has separated lead from other factors that can affect children's neurobehavior and performance on intellectual and developmental tests. Shell either rejected or did not know about many large prospective studies investigating the association between lead and children's attainment; these were controlled explicitly in study design, subject selection, and analysis for the important socioeconomic and familial factors.

Shell accuses many of us who were involved in these victories of prolonging the struggle artificially, for self-serving or institutional reasons. I live in a city where the median blood-lead level, as of 1993, was still 10 micrograms per deciliter, where public-health and housing departments lag far behind in managing cases of frank lead toxicity, and where the goal of primary prevention remains an unfulfilled dream.

Ellen K. Silbergeld
*Professor of Epidemiology and
 Preventive Medicine
 University of Maryland
 Baltimore, Md.*

Ellen Shell claims that the government arbitrarily reset the definition of poisoning at a blood-lead level below 25 micrograms per deciliter. "With the stroke of a pen . . . the CDC changed 'lead poisoning' from a clear diagnosis to a murky condition." In fact this new definition of toxicity was arrived at after five years of

study by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA used about sixty external consultants and came to the conclusion that children's IQ scores were lowered at blood-lead levels of 10 or perhaps lower. The Centers for Disease Control committee, twenty-five people from many disciplines, reviewed all these data in setting their guidelines. Their decision was no rhetorical pen stroke but the consequence of an intense and critical review.

Human epidemiological studies have their limits. Because we cannot give lead in measured doses to matched children, we must study it as nature and human activity distribute it to our subjects. There are, however, a number of elegant studies of animals given lead at closely controlled doses. In both monkeys and rodents behavioral measures showed effects closely resembling those found in children. This is a powerful refutation of the argument that the lead effect is actually due to socioeconomic factors. Shell nowhere indicates that there are such data.

Of my work Shell writes: "But although he is lauded for his crusade by policymakers, journalists, and child advocates, Needleman has come under heavy fire from scientists." Exactly two scientists have directed their fire at me. Both were defense witnesses in a \$100 million lawsuit brought by the Department of Justice and the EPA against the owners of a lead mill and mine. I was the principal government health witness. The suit was settled in favor of the government. These two defense witnesses alleged that I had manipulated the data in my research. This charge was investigated by my university and the Public Health Service. Both investigative committees found that every one of the allegations brought by these two people was false, and I am attempting to have this corrected through the court. The committees did state that I had made two deliberate errors in reporting.

Herbert L. Needleman
*Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry
 University of Pittsburgh
 School of Medicine
 Pittsburgh, Pa.*

Ellen Ruppel Shell replies:

The characterization of lead poisoning, a serious but rare condition, as a "national epidemic" is a dangerous rhetorical de-

vice that has frightened parents and misled legislators. The selective appraisals and conclusions of Don Ryan, Ellen Silbergeld, and Herbert Needleman, respectively executive director, board member, and founding board member of the Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, differ significantly from those of many other investigators. Two major reviews of the epidemiological evidence on environmental lead and children's intelligence (including several papers published by Dr. Needleman) conclude that much uncertainty remains as to the impact of mildly elevated blood leads (at levels of 10 to 20 micrograms per deciliter of blood) on children's health.

Mr. Ryan may have somehow determined that his home is lead-safe, but the consensus document from which he quotes makes the rather vague claim that 5 to 15 million housing units are not, and that many more will become unsafe as they age. The document advocates the containment of homes with lead hazards as merely an interim measure, and suggests that "other housing containing lead-based paint" be dealt with once "scarce resources" become available. The document states that "relatively little has been done to determine the most cost-effective strategies for evaluating and controlling lead hazards in housing"; it also makes clear that there is no consensus as to what constitutes a permanently lead-safe house, save a house devoid of lead.

In 1992 a committee of his colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh found Dr. Needleman guilty of the "deliberate misrepresentation" of procedures. Although he was not found guilty of scientific misconduct, the National Institutes of Health Office of Research Integrity, far from exonerating him, confirmed that he had used "substandard" methodology and that his reports contained "numerous errors and misstatements."

Childhood blood-lead levels have dropped sharply over the past two decades, corresponding with a well-documented increase in violence and learning disabilities. Yet no right-thinking person would conclude from this that the lowering of blood leads has resulted in such negative effects. What is likely is that the increase in our children's behavioral and learning difficulties has little to do with lead and a great deal to do with poverty and societal disruption.

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THE MARCH ALMANAC

Q&A

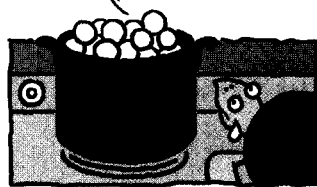
Why don't stutterers ever stutter when they sing?

Stutterers have a genetic predisposition to focus tension in their vocal cords, which may lock; stuttering is the attempt to unlock them. A singer's vocal cords are in constant motion, without the chance to tense up. In addition, singing, in which syllables are more elongated than in speech, moves the vocal cords differently. The anticipatory stress that exacerbates stuttering is less likely to occur during singing, because people tend to focus on the music more than on the words. And finally, music originates in the right side of the brain, and speech in the left; there may be little neurological connection between speaking and singing. At least one well-known figure used music to avert stuttering: Winston Churchill would hum before making speeches.



Environment

March 1, Californians may literally breathe a bit easier after today, the deadline by which the state's oil refineries must produce a cleaner-burning reformulated gasoline (RFG). By June 1 this will be the only gasoline sold at California's pumps. The new fuel will reduce emissions of toxic compounds by 30 to 40 percent and emissions of smog-forming compounds by 15 percent, making it twice as clean as an RFG that, owing to an Environmental Protection Agency mandate, has been in use in the nation's most polluted areas since January of last year. California's Air Resources Board estimates that introducing the new gasoline will have the same effect as removing 3.5 million vehicles from the state's roads.



Food

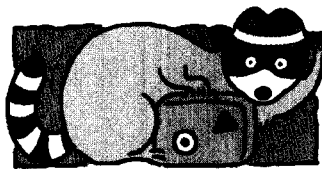
Sea turtles begin nesting along the country's southeast coast this month, which means poachers will be combing the beaches in search of turtle eggs. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 bans the possession and sale of sea-turtle eggs; nonetheless, a lucrative trade persists. The eggs, considered a delicacy and believed by some to be an aphrodisiac, sell for up to \$3 apiece on the black market; a single nest may contain as many as 150. Sea-turtle eggs have long been part of the Caribbean diet, and some immigrants from the region and from Central America still enjoy eating them; in some Florida bars and restaurants the eggs are served in shot glasses with liquor and Tabasco sauce, or as an off-the-menu special. They have long been used in southern cooking as well, especially in soups and baked goods. Poaching is not the only human hazard to threaten sea turtles and their eggs; pollution, shrimp nets, and coastal development also pose problems.

Government

This year's presidential candidates have a lot at stake this month, when some 60 percent of Republican delegates and 70 percent of Democratic ones will be chosen. Primaries or caucuses will be held on March 2 (South Carolina, for Republicans only); 5 (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont—New England is trying to increase its political influence—and also Colorado,



Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, and, for Democrats only, Idaho, South Carolina, and Washington); 7 (New York and, for Democrats only, Missouri); 9 (Alaska, Arizona, and South Dakota, all for Democrats only); 10 (Nevada, for Democrats only); 12 "Super Tuesday" (Florida; for Democrats only, Hawaii and Louisiana; Mississippi; Oklahoma; Oregon, which will become the first state to conduct its primary by mail; Tennessee; and Texas); 16 (Michigan, for Democrats only); 19 (Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and, for Republicans only, Michigan); 23 (Wyoming, for Democrats only); 25 (Utah, for Democrats only); and 26 (California and, for Republicans only, Washington and Nevada; Nevada's primary will also be conducted by mail).



Health & Safety

March ushers in spring and with it an active breeding season for many rabies hosts, including raccoons, foxes, coyotes, and skunks; as a result, the infection rate among these animals begins to surge. The disease has been rampant in U.S. wildlife since the late 1970s; however, the number of reported cases dipped by more than 10 percent in 1994, the last year for which figures have been tallied. State-run rabies-control programs and a new practice of scattering edible rabies vaccinations may be partly responsible for the decline. Raccoon rabies, the most notorious strain, has been making its way north from Florida for nearly 50 years; it reached Maine in 1994. However, in the past three years only 13 people in the United States have died of rabies, and most of these deaths have been attributed to bat strains of the virus.

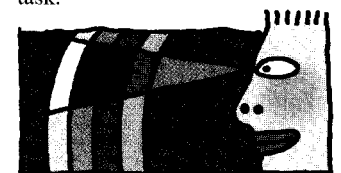


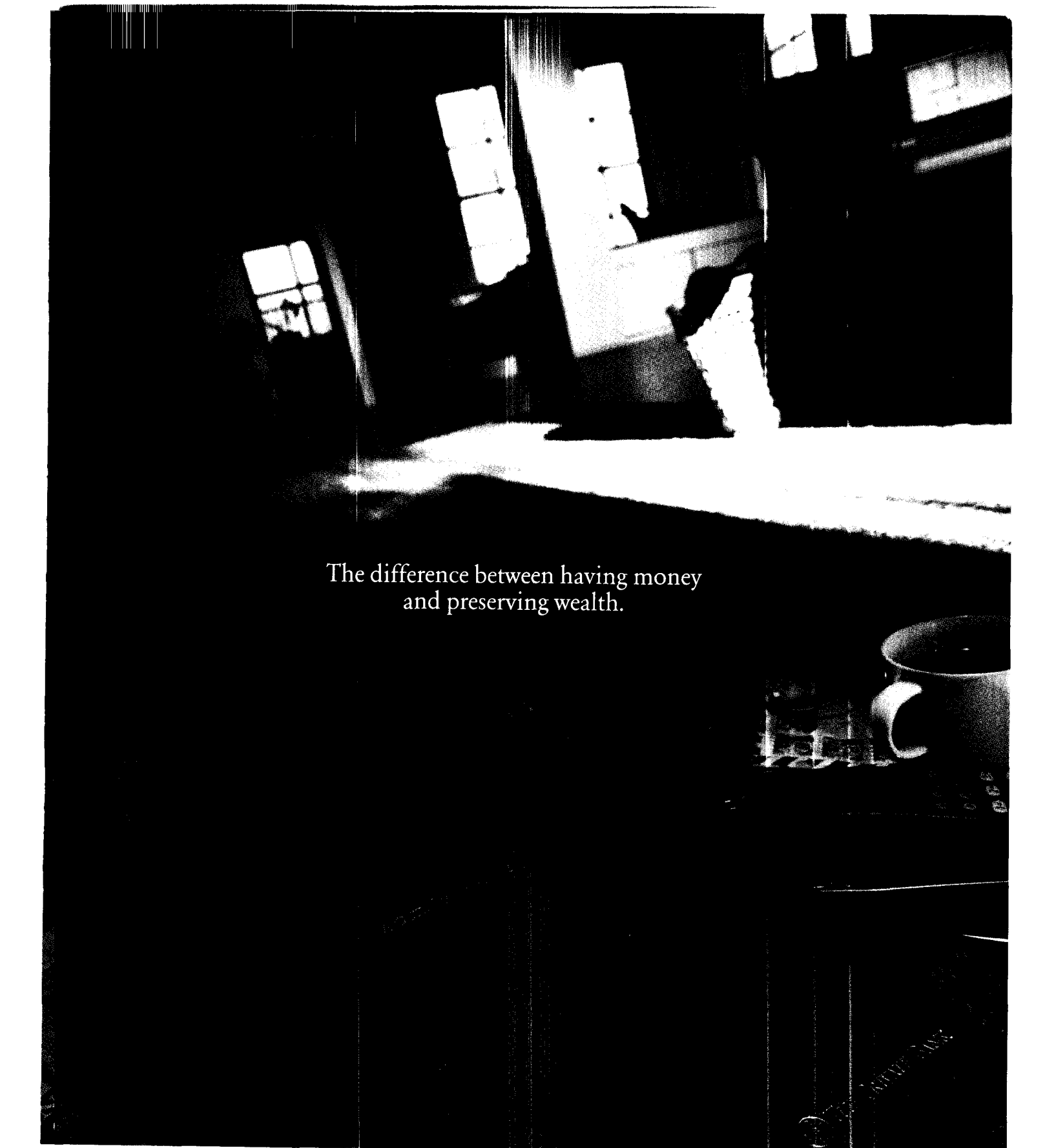
The Skies

March 5, Full Moon, also known this month as the Lenten, Sap, and Crow Moon. 20, at 3:03 A.M. EST the Vernal Equinox occurs, marking the start of spring. Wise gardeners sow their peas. 22, Venus, which appears as the bright evening star all month, lies north of the waxing crescent Moon and to the east of the Pleiades star cluster high in the western skies after sundown.

75 Years Ago

George M. Stratton, writing in the March, 1921, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "For, if there is anything upon which psychologists are agreed, it is that the mind is active; not indifferent, but selective, forever choosing and rejecting. Even its humblest experiences, the colors and sounds by which the world is known, are not given us, but are the mind's unique and mysterious response to external stimulation. Hue and tone, the students of physics and of psychology are agreed, do not exist in the external world. They are our reaction; and with them we create for ourselves a strange counterpart of the reality without. And for one object awakening enough interest to be noticed, ten have vainly assailed our eyes and ears and have been ignored. These acts of notice and selection do not seem acts, being without effort, without strain of will. But action is not always marked by effort: a child at play is as active as a child at some deadening task."





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Hello, Darkness

Dealing with yet another deficit

AMERICANS today have plenty of reasons to be thankful that they were not Americans a hundred years ago, but they also have more than a few reasons to wish they had been. On the one hand, a hundred years ago there was no Voting Rights Act, no penicillin, and no zipper, and the first daily comic strip was still more than a decade away. On the other hand, there was no income tax, no nuclear bomb, and no Maury Povich. Also on the plus side, the average American a hundred years ago was able to sleep 20 percent longer than the average American today.

That last figure, supported by various historical studies over the years, comes from a report released by the Better Sleep Council. Americans in the late 1800s are

believed to have slept an average of about nine and a half hours a night. The average today is about seven and a half hours. A survey by the Better Sleep Council reveals that on a typical weeknight almost 60 percent of Americans get *less* than seven hours of sleep. Other evidence seems to indicate that the rate of sleep loss is in fact accelerating.

Some may argue that the Better Sleep Council's news should be discounted, on the grounds that the council has an interest in the story—it is supported (comfortably?) by the mattress industry.

I would counter that the data simply confirm what anecdotal evidence already suggests is true. Independent experts at universities and hospitals speak as one on the subject, observing that as a nation we are laboring under a large and increasingly burdensome "sleep deficit," defined as the difference between how much sleep we need and how much we get.

Would that we could pass this particular deficit on to our children! But the only way we can pay it back, the experts say, is by

getting more sleep ourselves. Apparently, we're trying. A recent article in *The Wall Street Journal* took note of the growing phenomenon of employees napping at work, but I suspect that this barely covers the interest payments, which go right to Japan. (As you may have noticed, the Japanese are asleep most of the time that we're awake.)

Why, by degrees, are we banishing sleep? In a handful of

instances, arguably, the cause has been government over-regulation. I am thinking of the recent case of Sari Zayed, of Davis, California. Ms. Zayed, after being overheard by a neighbor, was awakened at 1:30 A.M. by a municipal "noise-abatement officer" who gave her a \$50 citation for snoring too loudly. The amount

of money that Ms. Zayed subsequently received in damages from the city of Davis would allow her to pay for nightly snoring citations from now to the end of the year.

America's sleep deficit, though, is surely a systemic phenomenon. Many commentators would blame it on what might be called the AWOL factor—that is, the American Way of Life. We are by nature a busy and ambitious people whom tectonic social

forces—declining average wage, high rate of divorce, two-paycheck families, instant telecommunications, jet travel across time zones,

growing popularity of soccer for everyone older than four—have turned into a race of laboratory rats on a treadmill going nowhere ever faster. And there is obviously something to this explanation. It is noteworthy that television shows like *Seinfeld* and *Cheers*, on which nobody seems to have any real responsibilities (circumstances that accord more fully with most viewers' fantasies than with their actual lives), have come to constitute a distinct broadcast genre known as "time porn."



by Cullen Murphy

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■ ■ ■

It is hard not to credit the importance of the AWOL factor, but I wonder if the driving force behind the sleep deficit is in fact more pervasive, and indeed global in nature: the triumph of light. I am by no means a romantic or a Luddite when it comes to electricity (anyone who should read Robert Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* for its haunting description of life in west Texas in the days before rural electrification), and I also don't subscribe to the fashionable opinion that electronic labor-saving devices (personal computers possibly excepted) end up consuming more labor than they save. Yet electricity's ubiquitous and seemingly most innocuous use—to power the common light bulb—could not help exacting a price in sleep. Electricity made it possible for the first time in history for masses of humanity to vanquish darkness.

I had never given much thought to the role of darkness in ordinary human affairs until I read a monograph prepared by John Staudenmaier, a historian of technology and a Jesuit priest, for a recent conference at MIT. (The essay will appear in a book called *The Idea of Progress Revisited*, edited by Leo Marx and Bruce Mazlish.) Staudenmaier makes the point—obvious when brought up, though we've mostly lost sight of it—that from the time of the hominid Lucy, in Hadar, Ethiopia, to the time of Thomas Edison, in West Orange, New Jersey, the onset of darkness sharply curtailed most kinds of activity for most of our ancestors. He writes,

Living with electric lights makes it difficult to retrieve the experience of a non-electrified society. For all but the very wealthy, who could afford exorbitant arrays of expensive artificial lights, nightfall brought the works of daytime to a definitive end. Activities that need good light—where sharp tools are wielded or sharply defined boundaries maintained; purposeful activities designed to achieve specific goals; in short, that which we call work—all this subsided in the dim light of evening. Absent the press of work, people typically took themselves safely to home and were left with time in the evening for less urgent and more sensual matters: storytelling, sex, prayer, sleep, dreaming.

Staudenmaier's comments on electric light occupy only a few passages. His larger subject is Western intellectual history, and how metaphors of "enlightenment" came to be associated with orderliness, objectivity, and progress, even as metaphors of darkness came to signify the chaotic, the nonrational, the terrifying. He argues that we have lost, to our detriment, the medieval view that some aspects of life and understanding are not necessarily helped by clarity or harmed by ambiguity. Observing that Enlightenment ideals have "taken a fair beating" in the course of this century, Staudenmaier wonders if it is time to re-

discover the metaphysical dark, that place "where visions are born and human purpose renewed."

I'll leave that thought where it is. But the implication of electricity in the sleep deficit seems hard to argue with. Whatever it is that we wish or are made to do—pursue leisure, earn a living—there are simply far more usable hours now in which to do it. Darkness was once an ocean into which our capacity to venture was greatly limited; now we are wresting vast areas of permanent lightness from the darkness, much the way the Dutch have wrested polders of dry land from the sea. So vast are these areas that in composite satellite photographs of the world at night the contours of civilization are clearly illuminated—the boundaries of continents, the metastases of cities. Even Wrigley Field, once a reliable pool of nocturnal darkness, would now show up seventeen nights during the baseball season. In the United States at midnight more than five million people are at work at full-time jobs. Supermar-

kets, gas stations, copy shops—many of these never close. I know of a dentist in Ohio who decided to open an all-night clinic, and has had the last laugh on friends who believed that he would never get patients. The supply-side theory may not have worked in economics, but it has certainly worked with regard to light: the more we get, the more we find ways to put it to use. And, of course, the more we get, the more we distance ourselves from the basic diurnal rhythm in which our evolution occurred.

■ ■ ■

Thomas Edison, famous for subsisting on catnaps, would have wanted it this way. In contrast, Calvin Coolidge, a younger man with an older temperament, slept at least ten and often as much as eleven hours a day. Two world

views collide here, and somewhere between them is a balance waiting to be struck. Where and how? The only useful contribution I can make is to recall life in Ireland in the mid-1960s. One of the elements that made it so congenial was a shared expertise among engineers at the Electricity Supply Board which resulted in regular but unpredictably occurring blackouts. The relentless march of time would suddenly be punctuated by a limbo of uncertain duration. Lights were extinguished. Clocks stopped. Television screens went black. Drivers became hesitant and generous at traffic signals. Society and all its components took a blessed time out.

There was also something in Ireland called "holy hour," a period in the afternoon when all the pubs would close. Perhaps what Americans need is a holy hour in the form of a blackout—a brief caesura in our way of life that might come every day at perhaps nine-thirty or ten at night. Not the least of the holy hour's benefits, I might add, would be an appealing new time slot for Maury Povich. ☞



*Americans in the
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believed to have slept
an average of
about nine and a half
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A Bazaari's World

*To understand Iran—and perhaps even the future
of other parts of the Islamic world—one
must understand a man like
Mohsen Rafiqdoost*

FEBRUARY 1, 1979, was the most important day in the life of Mohsen Rafiqdoost. On that day the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran by plane from a fourteen-year exile imposed by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who had left two weeks earlier. Khomeini's plane arrived from Paris. The route from the airport to downtown Tehran was lined with adoring millions. Rafiqdoost pulled his

by **Robert D. Kaplan**

car up to the plane. He was to be Khomeini's driver and the chief of Khomeini's personal-security detail.

"What kind of car was it?" I asked.

Rafiqdoost's eyes flashed. His face exploded in a self-satisfied grin. "A Chevy Blazer," he said.

I met Rafiqdoost during a visit to Iran not long ago, and we spent more than two hours talking in his Tehran office. He seemed every bit the bodyguard. Energy

and aggression rippled from his compact, slightly stocky physique as he sat on the edge of his chair, tapping his foot and banging his thigh with his fist, and nodding his head whenever he had a point to make. Rafiqdoost has a short salt-and-pepper beard and thin straight hair that is only now, in his mid-fifties, showing signs of receding. His profile is vaguely feral, in a way that makes him look menacing without making him ugly. His small, beetle-shell eyes radiate a playful dangerousness.

During our meeting Rafiqdoost straddled the line between suave and sleazy. He could almost have passed for a nightclub bouncer. He wore a designer-quality striped shirt, a well-tailored black sports jacket, and gray slacks. His beard was neatly clipped. On his feet, though, were rubber beach thongs—a high-quality brand like the kind sold in L. L. Bean catalogues. Rafiqdoost apologized for the thongs. "I forgot that a visitor was expected. They are more comfortable to work in."

He was quite serious about the work. Around his desktop computer was a clutter of notes and documents, upon which lay a pair of reading glasses with fashionable frames. Iran, somewhat like Turkey, and unlike most places in the Third World, is a place where office desks are used for real work rather than merely for the display of petty bureaucratic power. The desk and the office managed to be impressive nonetheless, with fashionable olive-gray chairs and a Sony television set.

Rafiqdoost is definitely a man of parts, and a dynamic one at that—as talented and dangerous with his computer as he is with his fists. That is why I wanted to see him. For Rafiqdoost had not only been Khomeini's chief bodyguard. He also played a key role in forming the Revolutionary Guards that brutally crushed secular moderates and members of the leftist Mojahedin-e Khalq (People's Holy Warriors), among other supposed enemies of the Islamic Revolution. Rafiqdoost now controls something called the Bonyad-e Mostazafan (Foundation of the Oppressed), Iran's largest holding company. The Bonyad is made up of some 1,200 firms, and was established with money confiscated from the Shah's family and from prominent industrialists who fled the revolution. One Iranian, no fan of Rafiqdoost's, calls this foundation—ostensibly an operation to help the poor—"the greatest cartel in history." Rafiqdoost is, in all probability, worth tens or hundreds of millions of dollars.

When I entered his office, he offered me his hand as if from a podium. He had little modesty. He knew his importance.

HOW Rafiqdoost happened to be behind the wheel of that Chevy Blazer the day Khomeini returned to Iran, how he took control of a substantial part of the Shah's fortune, and how he converted that fortune into an even bigger financial empire—these are things for which a Marxist would have a ready answer: they are the result of Rafiqdoost's socio-economic class. In this case the Marxist would be right. Rafiqdoost is a *bazaari*, a member of the class of people who helped make the Iranian Revolution.

Ironically, the Marxist probably never would have identified the *bazaaris* as a social class in the first place. This is because Marxists see classes only as they relate to the means of production, not as

they actually function. As Nikki R. Keddi has pointed out, in *Roots of Revolution*, *bazaaris* don't fall into any of the usual categories. The worker in a hole-in-the-wall shop in the bazaar is certainly in a position different from that of a big moneylender in the bazaar. But both the laborer and the moneylender are *bazaaris*. They are both involved in petty trade of a traditional, or nearly traditional, kind, centered on the bazaar and its Islamic culture. At least, that has been the usual definition of *bazaari*.

Bazaar is a Persian word that means "market." Westerners often use it interchangeably with the Arabic word *souk* for markets throughout Muslim North Africa and the Near East. The bazaar is often the first place tourists head for, in order to lose themselves in serpentine alleys lined with shops, sometimes built under picturesque archways—as in Tunis or Jerusalem—conjuring up the cliché of the "fabulous East." Although Western goods are sold in the bazaar, and *bazaaris* sell souvenirs to Western tourists and smile before their cameras, real Westernization—supermarkets, department stores, machine-made goods, large banks—threatens the *bazaari*'s livelihood. The smile before the camera, therefore, is often a deceptive one.

But *bazaaris* are not simply the men behind the stalls in the picturesque Oriental market. According to a relatively new definition that has taken hold among academics and journalists in the past few decades, *bazaaris* as a social class can exist only in places where the society is in the midst of an awkward modernization; where the bazaar is in some stage of transition between the world of *A Thousand and One Nights* and that of the suburban shopping mall; where the welder's sparks singe the classic image of turbaned men inhaling tobacco smoke from hubble-bubbles.

Bazaaris, therefore, though age-old in the historical sense, are relatively new in the political sense. The Muslim Brotherhood—the Ikhwan—in Egypt is heavily backed by *bazaari* types. Although that organization, so dangerous to pro-Western regimes in the Near East, consists largely of narrowly educated men of peasant background, it is the better-educated sons of traditional *bazaaris*, like Rafiqdoost, being a slight step up on the social ladder, who often lead the narrowly edu-

cated men in trying to topple an established order.

In other words, *bazaaris* constitute a sort of newly established Islamic petty bourgeoisie. They must compete with more-experienced Christian and Jewish merchants, both in and outside the bazaar. This competition quickens the *bazaaris'* resentments, which are often similar to those that were in evidence among the petty bourgeoisie in Europe during the age of industrialization.

The Near East at the end of the twentieth century is, of course, a region in great social turmoil and economic transition, as Europe was throughout the nineteenth century and in the twentieth until the Second World War. *Bazaari* types are increasingly significant politically, as the case of the Muslim Brotherhood suggests. "Rafiqdoost," an Iranian friend explained, "is an absolute *bazaari* through and through"; a boy of the streets who learned math with a scratch pad at his father's fruit stand. In the Muslim Near East, especially in Iran, only a *bazaari* could assume the roles of both bodyguard and financier.

WHAT has distinguished Iranian *bazaaris* from those in other fast-changing societies in the Islamic world is their close links with the clergy, or *ulama*, a relationship that developed during the nineteenth century under the rule of the Qajar shahs. As Nikki Keddie writes,

Ulama and *bazaaris* often belonged to the same families; much ulama income came from levies paid mainly by *bazaaris*; the guilds often celebrated religious or partly religious ceremonies for which the services of ulama were needed; and piety and religious observance were among the signs of *bazaar* standing or leadership. (Even today respectable *bazaar* shopkeepers and moneylenders are often addressed as "Hajji," whether or not the speaker knows if the addressee has made a pilgrimage justifying this form of address.) Entry into the ulama through study was an avenue of upward social mobility and entailed more respect than entry into Qajar service. Mosques and shrines [located close to the bazaar] were a major area of *bast* (refuge) for individuals and groups that feared governmental arrest or harassment.

But the *bazaari* looks at religion from a businessman's point of view. As one Iranian acquaintance explained, "The *bazaari*

is willing to bend the rules of religion for the sake of finance.” The so-called hypocrisy and corruption of the Iranian clergy sometimes stem from the *bazaari* backgrounds of many of the mullahs.

“Describe a stereotypical *bazaari*,” I asked a longtime foreign resident of Tehran who speaks Persian. He answered, putting it in the form of a caricature, “A *bazaari* is a fat guy with meaty hands and fingers like kebabs, with gold rings on them. He sits in his shop and sips tea. He trades. He makes a lot of money and he prays several times a day. He comes home at night to a big, expensive house with nothing of taste in it, where he has a wife who slaves for him.”

“Yes, I am a *bazaari*,” a vendor in the Tehran bazaar told me. “I buy and sell things.”

“In other words, you are a thief,” interjected the vendor next to him, laughing.

Vahid, the son of a mullah in Tehran, told me, “A *bazaari* will say to himself, ‘I am a man of God who prays very often, so if I say that such and such a carpet that I wish to sell to you is worth so many rials, that is the true worth of the carpet, since a religious man like me would never lie.’ Because the *bazaari* is religious, he believes that he is always right.” He went on, “The word for ‘beard’ in Persian can be *pashm*, which also means ‘wool.’ The *bazaari*, while stroking his beard, will say to a customer regarding a carpet for sale, ‘Yes, this is made of very good wool.’”

The bazaar where Rafiqdoost grew up is the quintessential bazaar in transition: a labyrinthine world of corrugated iron roofs, brick archways, and plate glass in the midst of a poor working-class region of South Tehran. It lacks any trace of beauty—save for the eighteenth-century Imam Khomeini Mosque (formerly the Shah Mosque) at its center—and is filled with every manner of goods, from *chadors* and carpets to pots and pans to radios and television sets to American candy bars.

Rafiqdoost grew up as not just a *bazaari* but, more specifically, a *meydani* (“person of the square”): someone who worked in the fruit-and-vegetable market and therefore had few business connections with Westerners or their companies—of the sort that, for example, a seller of expensive carpets or electronic goods would have had. Yet Rafiqdoost’s clan is not unsophisticated: members of his extended family include doctors and engi-

neers. Rafiqdoost’s brother used to run another of the handful of large revolutionary foundations established with money confiscated from the Shah.

“I was born in South Tehran, near the bazaar, to a very religious family close to the Imam,” Rafiqdoost told me. “I was always pro-Imam. I am a self-made man. I was not allowed to enter university, because I was expelled from high school in 1953, when I was thirteen, for pro-Mosaddeq activities. [Mohammad Mosaddeq was the Iranian Prime Minister who nationalized Western oil companies in 1951 and was subsequently overthrown in a 1953 coup organized, in part, by the Central Intelligence Agency.] Anti-Shah sentiment was something I learned in my home growing up. In 1976 I was jailed for political reasons. Four months before the revolution, in 1978, I was released when the people stormed the prisons [as part of the series of demonstrations that culminated in the Shah’s downfall]. Immediately after leaving prison I became a contact point for anti-regime people, and for distributing the Imam’s decrees from Paris. I was also hiding people from the Shah’s police. When the Imam decided to return to Iran, a revolutionary council was organized. I was given the task of logistics and personal security for the Imam. That’s when I decided that I myself would be the Imam’s driver.” Though Rafiqdoost is not now known for violence, his past leadership of the violent Revolutionary Guards demonstrates to all in Iran his capacity for it.

I asked Rafiqdoost about the financial particulars of the Bonyad, the Foundation of the Oppressed, whose 1,200 companies are involved in mining, housing construction, transportation, hotels, and tourism. In 1993, Rafiqdoost said, the Bonyad made a profit of 250 billion rials, or, in 1993 terms, roughly \$100 million. “The first part of our profits go for the victims of the Shah and the wounded in the eight-year war with Iraq. The second part is for high schools in poor areas, for public-health clinics, for clothes for five hundred thousand needy students. The third part is for reinvesting.”

I did not doubt the foundation’s commitment to the needy and the war wounded. The amputee who operated the elevator that took me up to Rafiqdoost’s office was only one of a number of handicapped young men I saw working there. But the Foundation of the Oppressed, as the larg-

est holding company in an oil-producing country of about 65 million people, has gargantuan amounts of real estate, cash, and other assets. It is a state within a state. The foundation’s headquarters, where I met with Rafiqdoost, consists of three new office towers of polished white stone; I had to pass through two heavily guarded checkpoints in order to enter the complex. It was more impressive than any government ministry I saw in Tehran.

Were the amputees who were employed inside, along with the charity work and the whole aura of do-goodism exemplified by the foundation’s very name, merely façades—like the milk factory that was thought to be a cover for a chemical-weapons facility in Iraq? Was the foundation’s emphasis on helping the “oppressed” the tactical equivalent of putting a terrorists’ training facility near a school or hospital, as was done in Lebanon?

I asked myself such cynical questions because the Foundation of the Oppressed and other revolutionary foundations established with the Shah’s money are answerable only to the “Supreme Leader” of Iran, the Ayatollah Ali Khameneh’i, to whose home Rafiqdoost says he goes to pray. Iran’s elected President, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has little control over the foundation’s activities. The ability of the Central Bank of Iran to tax the foundation, or to monitor its foreign-currency flows—let alone audit its activities—is close to nil. In the view of a Washington-based analyst, “Rafiqdoost is a New Age *bazaari*, with few of the redeeming virtues of his forefathers. He is a mobster-trader: a dark, rootless master monopolist.” Who can say to what groups in the Middle East and elsewhere Rafiqdoost may be sending checks? Rafiqdoost and Khameneh’i can. Khameneh’i’s photograph hangs in a large and ornate gold frame in Rafiqdoost’s office, next to a similarly framed photograph of Imam Khomeini. Conspicuous by its absence is a picture of President Rafsanjani, whose cabinet includes American-educated technocrats who for years have tried unsuccessfully, because of insufficient political clout, to move Iran closer to the West.

But the possibility that Rafiqdoost is operating a financial and logistical clearinghouse for international terrorism was less intriguing to me than the possibility that the Foundation of the Oppressed represents a new kind of economic organi-

zation in a new kind of emerging state. Such a state will be well suited to the porous borders and the political chaos of the region. The empire to Iran's north, the Soviet Union, has collapsed, bringing into existence a collection of weakly governed fiefdoms in Central Asia; the state to the east, Afghanistan, has disintegrated into landlocked emirates based on drug trafficking; the state to the west, Iraq, an artificial construct of European colonialism, is a veritable penitentiary facing eventual explosion and possible collapse; and the state to the northwest, Turkey, is engaged in a violent struggle between Turks and Kurds over the ethnic duality of its Anatolian land mass.

MIGHT the most enduring legacy of the Islamic Revolution be the *bazaar* nature of the Iranian economy? The *bazaaris* have created a political and economic system that is a larger version of the South Tehran bazaar. The Bonyad and the other foundations are expanded versions of the wholesalers and retailers with whom small shopkeepers are not in a position to compete, because they can't afford the bribes and don't have the connections. The alliance between *bazaaris* and clergy now exists at a higher level too. As in the bazaar, the rules are far more flexible and contradictory than those that any nation-state system familiar to a Westerner would ever tolerate. Some enterprises may import and export dollars; some may not. Some can do it at this rate of exchange; others must do it at that rate of exchange.

The ancient and informal roadside-banking system in Iran is often more reliable than the official banking system, where one might deposit money today and find that it can't be withdrawn tomorrow, unless the teller is bribed. Huge profits are being hidden and spent on who knows what. But that doesn't mean the poor have been forgotten. Like traditional *bazaaris*, all the corporate *bazaaris* give alms. (I didn't see more than a few beggars during an entire month in Iran.) Rafiqdoost, I mean to suggest, is still the fruit seller. He goes over his books with a computer rather than a scratch pad. As a devout Muslim, he gives a generous portion of his proceeds to the needy. He deals with the authorities on an informal after-hours basis. Here is a murky cosmos of deals and mutual favors for which written laws have yet to be drafted.

The bazaar isn't so much filling a void in post-revolutionary Iran as it is defining the chaos. The most telling fact about the Iran of the mid-1990s is that the system of competing power centers bequeathed by the revolution is breaking down, and yet nothing, and no one, is even remotely on the horizon to serve as a replacement. The monarchy, an institution with which Iranians had a troubled history long before the Shah, has been discredited. The military is possibly too deeply divided to take back power. As for democracy, the freely elected parliament is merely a venue for factionalism and attacks against the government. True, the present ruling coalition of radical mullahs and the security services could fissure, leaving the parliament and the presidential cabinet in control. Such a development would hardly bring stability. And if, as is more likely in the short run, the power of the mullahs under Ali Khameneh'i increases, then so will the influence of the *bazaaris*, and of their way of doing things. But there are limits to how much even this regime can get away with. If any recent event demonstrates the fragility of Iran's quickly ossifying revolutionary system, it is the conviction late last year of eight businessmen closely connected with the ruling clerics, including Rafiqdoost's brother, Morteza, on charges of stealing and embezzling as much as \$400 million. The public outcry made it impossible for the regime to protect even its own money-men. One of the eight was hanged, and Rafiqdoost's brother got a life sentence. Rafiqdoost himself was sufficiently threatened that Ali Khameneh'i had to reaffirm him publicly as the head of the Foundation of the Oppressed.

Nevertheless, while observing and listening to Rafiqdoost, I wondered, Might this be normality? Might this be *it*? Might Iran constitute a culture that is too urbane and sophisticated for a one-man thugocracy like the ones that obtain next door in Iraq and Syria, yet not sophisticated enough for a reasonably functioning and stable democracy? Is Iran—like so many other entities in the Middle East and Central Asia—evolving into something neither authoritarian nor democratic nor even organized the way a state is ordinarily thought to be? I could not escape the conviction that the twenty-first century will see the implosion of political Islam and the rise of the Islamic bazaar state. ☉

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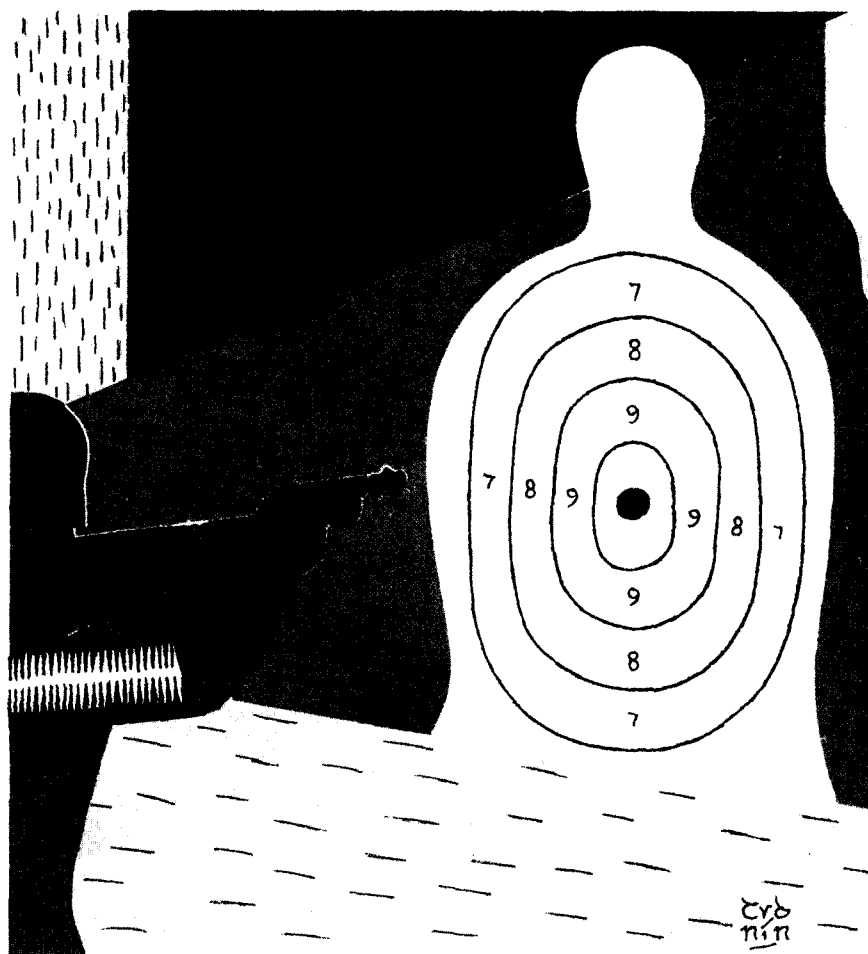
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PANTHEON



Second Thoughts on the Second Amendment

At the heart of the gun-control debate is a fundamental tension between republicanism and individualism

CALMLY, patiently, with considerable bravery, the instructor at the shooting range shows me how to fire the submachine gun, a MAC-11—the first real gun I have ever held. It jams repeatedly. “That’s why they call it a Jam-o-matic,” someone says. Finally, anticlimactically, like an idiot, I am shooting up the floor (the instructor told

me to aim down). Seven or eight men standing behind me await their turns.

The fully automatic MAC-11—small, relatively lightweight, with little recoil—is less intimidating than the semi-automatic rifles, which I can’t quite bring myself to use. I am anxious enough around the handguns. “Lean forward,” the instructor keeps telling me,

while I lean back, trying to get as far away from the gun as I can. How do thirteen-year-olds do this? I wonder, trying not to hurt myself with a huge, heavy revolver. I jump every time a shot is fired (and can’t wait for the guys to stop playing with the machine gun). I can barely get the slide back on one of the semi-automatic handguns. But I’m pleased when I hit the target with the 9mm Glock, the only one of these guns I can imagine being able to use. And when someone offers me a casing from the Walther PPK I’ve just shot (James Bond’s gun, everyone points out), I pocket it.

I’ve been invited to the shooting range to “observe and try out the right to bear arms in action,” along with about twenty other participants in a two-day seminar on guns and the Constitution, sponsored by Academics for the Second Amendment. Funded partly by the National Rifle Association, Academics for the Second Amendment isn’t exactly a collection of academic gun nuts—most of its more than 500 members aren’t academics, and its president, Joseph Olson, an NRA board member and a professor at Hamline Law School, in Minnesota, seems a rational, open-minded man. But the organization is engaged in a genteel lobbying effort to popularize what many liberals consider the gun nut’s view of the Second Amendment: that it confers an individual right to bear arms, not just the right to bear arms in a well-regulated militia.

Since it was founded, in 1992, Academics for the Second Amendment has held four by-invitation-only seminars for academics who share its beliefs about the Second Amendment—or might be persuaded to adopt them. The year before last I asked permission to attend a seminar but was turned down; last year I received an unsolicited invitation, apparently in response to an article in which I had questioned the effectiveness of traditional approaches to gun control.

Don Kates, who is a San Francisco lawyer, a gun aficionado, and the author of numerous articles on guns and the Constitution, leads the seminar energetically, taking only a little time out to show us pictures of his parrot. His approach is scatter-shot, or spray and pray. Ranging over legal, moral, and practical arguments for private gun ownership, he discusses self-

by Wendy Kaminer



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defense and the deterrent effect of an armed citizenry; the correlation between guns and crime; difficulties of enforcing gun controls; bigotry against gun owners; and, finally, constitutional rights. Comments by participants are sometimes sensible and occasionally insane: one man proclaims that mothers should give guns to children who attend dangerous public schools.

"What would you do if you had a fourteen-year-old kid who felt he needed a gun for self-defense?" he asks me repeatedly.

"I'd take him out of school before giving him a gun."

The Supreme Court has paid scant attention to the Second Amendment, providing little guidance in the gun-control debate.

But even among gun advocates there is relatively little support for the rights of juveniles to own guns, or opposition to bans on juvenile ownership. Opposition to gun prohibitions focuses on attempts to disarm more or less sane, law-abiding adults, who are deemed to be endowed with both natural and constitutional rights to self-defense against criminals and despots.

Like moral and legal claims about gun owners' rights, the practical consequences of widespread gun ownership are highly debatable. No one can say with any certainty whether it increases violence or decreases crime. Don Kates speculates that magically reducing the approximately 200 million firearms in circulation to five million would have virtually no reductive effect on the crime rate: according to a 1983 National Institute of Justice-funded study by James D. Wright, Peter H. Rossi, and Kathleen Daly, about one percent of privately owned firearms are involved in criminal activity, suggesting that eliminating 99 percent of the nation's guns would not ameliorate crime. Or would it? Philip Cook, an economist at Duke University and a leading researcher on gun violence,

considers Kates's speculation about the uselessness of reducing the number of guns "patently absurd." We can't predict which guns will be used in crimes, he says, even if a relatively small number are used feloniously overall. Reducing the availability of guns would raise their price and therefore reduce their accessibility, to adult felons as well as juveniles. And even if a drastic reduction in the number of guns wouldn't necessarily decrease crime, it would decrease fatalities. Guns are particularly lethal, Cook has stressed: the "fraction of serious gun assaults that result in the victim's death is much higher than that of assaults with other weapons." Since not all gun homicides reflect a clearly formulated intent to kill, Cook reasons, access to guns can increase the lethality of assaults. A decrease in the use of guns, however, might lead to an increase in nonfatal injuries. Robberies committed with guns tend to involve less violence than other robberies because the victims are less likely to resist. (Cook speculates that victims who do resist robbers armed with guns are more likely to be killed.)

Debates about gun ownership and gun control are driven more by values and ideology than by pragmatism—and hardly at all by the existing empirical research, which is complex and inconclusive. Wright, Rossi, and Daly reported that there is not even any "suggestive evidence" showing that "gun ownership . . . as a whole is, per se, an important cause of criminal violence." The evidence that guns deter criminal violence is equally insubstantial, they added, as is evidence that additional gun controls would reduce crime. Many are already in place and rarely, if ever, enforced; or they make no sense. In 1983 Wright, Rossi, and Daly concluded that the "benefits of stricter gun controls . . . are at best uncertain, and at worst close to nil."

As for legal debates about the existence of constitutional rights, empirical data is irrelevant, or at best peripheral. But the paucity of proof that gun controls lessen crime is particularly galling to people who believe that they have a fundamental right to bear arms. In theory, at least, we restrict constitutional rights only when the costs of exercising them seem unbearably high. In fact we argue continually about what those costs are: Does violence in the media cause violence in real life? Did the release of the Pentagon Papers endanger

the national security? Does hate speech constitute discrimination? In the debate about firearms, however, we can't even agree on the principles that should govern restrictions on guns, because we can't agree about the right to own them.

How could we, given the importance of the competing values at stake—public safety and the right of self-defense—and the opacity of the constitutional text? The awkwardly drafted Second Amendment doesn't quite make itself clear: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Is the reference to a militia a limitation on the right to bear arms or merely an explanation of an armed citizenry's role in a government by consent? There is little dispute that one purpose of the Second Amendment was to ensure that the people would be able to resist a central government should it ever devolve into despotism. But there is little agreement about what that capacity for resistance was meant to entail—armed citizens acting under the auspices of state militias or armed citizens able to organize and act on their own. And there is virtually no consensus about the constitutional right to own a gun in the interests of individual self-defense against crime, rather than communal defense against tyranny. Is defense of the state, and of the common good, the *raison d'être* of the Second Amendment or merely one use of it?

THE Supreme Court has never answered these fundamental questions about the constitutional uses of guns. It has paid scant attention to the Second Amendment, providing little guidance in the gun-control debate. Two frequently cited late-nineteenth-century cases relating to the Second Amendment were more about federalism than about the right to bear arms. *Presser v. Illinois*, decided in 1886, involved a challenge to a state law prohibiting private citizens from organizing their own military units and parades. The Court held that the Second Amendment was a limitation on federal, not state, power, reflecting the prevailing view (now discredited) that the Bill of Rights in general applied only to the federal government, not to the states. (A hundred years ago the Court did not apply the First Amendment to the states either.) *Presser*
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MARCH
1996

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW

Film

The Year of
the Strong
Supporting Cast

Dance

Elizabeth Streb's
Vertical Realm

Theater

A Nightmare
From the
Golden Age

Classical

A Fresh Look
at the Orpheus
Chamber
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Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

ELLA'S WISHFUL PICKS . . .

A year that saw the triumph of technique over soul (*Seven*, *The Usual Suspects*, *Casino*) also unearthed some movie treasures—and a host of standout supporting performances.

Denzel Washington as a gumshoe in *Devil*

Best Picture: Carl Franklin's *Devil in a Blue Dress* combined a ravishing period piece about 1940s black L.A. with a witty genre picture.

Runners-up: Spike Lee's *Clockers*, a howl of anguish about the inner-city drug culture; Todd Haynes's *Safe*, an eerie comic horror about environmental illness; Terry Zwigoff's disturbing *Crumb*, a study of artist Robert Crumb; Steven M. Martin's *Theremin—An Electronic Odyssey*, a soulful, witty account of the birth of electronic music; Richard Loncraine's waggish *Richard III*, set in 1930s England.

Best Fresh Talent: Two enchanting children's movies—Alfonso Cuarón's neglected *A Little Princess* and Chris Noonan's mega-hit, *Babe*.

Runners-up: Noah Baumbach's literate coming-of-age gabfest, *Kicking and Screaming*; Mark Malone's sharp neo-noir send-up, *Bulletproof Heart*.

Best Foreign-Language Film: Martine Dugowson's *Mina Tannenbaum*, a tough and tender tale of the friendship of two Jewish Parisiennes.

Runner-up: Michael Radford's *Il Postino*, a lyrical fantasy about Pablo Neruda and his poetic postman.

Best Actress: Julie Delpy, for her subtle, luminous performance as Ethan Hawke's chatty overnight pickup in Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise*.

Runners-up: Nicole Kidman, for her careerist weather lady in *To Die For*, a coming-out party for her comic gifts; Kathy

Bates, for her matter-of-fact authenticity in *Dolores Claiborne*; Jennifer Jason Leigh, for taking it to the limit as the caterwauling sister in *Georgia*; Rena Owen, for her fierce performance as the abused wife in *Once Were Warriors*; Amanda Root, for her quiet authority as the lead in *Persuasion*; Minnie Driver, for her straightforward charm in *Circle of Friends*.

Best Supporting Actress: Joan Allen, for a slow-burn performance of smoldering power as Pat Nixon in Oliver Stone's *Nixon*.

Runners-up: Eleanor Bron, at once scary and piteous as the severe headmistress in *A Little Princess*; Mira Sorvino, pure joy as the good-hearted tart in *Mighty Aphrodite*; Olivia D'Abo, smart and funny as the girlfriend in *Kicking and Screaming*; Sophie Thompson, for disappearing into a difficult role as the youngest sister in *Persuasion*; Dana Ivey, uproarious as Harrison Ford's unflappable secretary in *Sabrina*.

Best Actor: Jeff Bridges, for his generous, complex rendition of Wild Bill Hickok's scruffier side in Walter Hill's underrated *Wild Bill*.

Runners-up: Jonathan Pryce, for balancing camp and dignity as Lytton Strachey in *Carrington*; Harrison Ford, beautifully understated as the unwilling lover in *Sabrina*; John Travolta, as the warmhearted thug in *Get Shorty*; Massimo Troisi, for his painfully shy postman in *Il Postino*; Sean Penn, for his truculent convict in *Dead Man Walking*; Denzel Washington, for his hunky intelligence as the reluctant gumshoe in *Devil in a Blue Dress*.



A new look for Jeff Bridges

Best Supporting Actor: Don Cheadle, for his hilariously deadpan turn as Mouse, the loose-cannon hit man in *Devil in a Blue Dress*.

Runners-up: Delroy Lindo, for his charismatic drug lord in *Clockers*; Tim Roth, evil incarnate as the fencing villain in *Rob Roy*; Patrick Swayze, as the queenly queen in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*; and just about everybody in the *Nixon* ensemble.

AND CREATIVE THINKING

The Hit Lit Award goes jointly to screenwriters Nick Dear, for *Persuasion*, Emma Thompson, for *Sense and Sensibility*, and Amy Heckerling, for *Clueless*—three radically different but equally sharp adaptations of Jane Austen novels. We await an Austen theme park at Euro-Disney.

The Lit Crit Award goes jointly to Roland Joffé, for mutating Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* into a hot little steamfest,

and to Demi Moore, for her inspired rendition of Hester Prynne as Moll Flanders with implants.

The Iron John Award goes to Mel Gibson (*Braveheart*) and Liam Neeson (*Rob Roy*), for the courage to be all that they can be—warriors in skirts.

The Sensitive Male Award goes to screenwriter Joe Eszterhas (*Jade*, *Showgirls*), for his uncanny understanding of what women really want—rape, abuse, violence, humiliation.

Runners-up: Clint Eastwood, for showing Meryl Streep how to love in *The Bridges of Madison County*; Woody Allen, for *Mighty Aphrodite*, a film about a woman who adopts a child because she has no time to be pregnant. However did you think that one up, Woody?

The Four Legs Good Award goes to the army of valiant young porkers who served as the lead in *Babe*. (Each pig thespian outgrew the role in turn.)

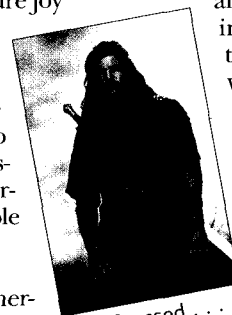
The Web Site Award goes jointly to Kevin Costner's fetching ears in *Waterworld* and to the talented duck in *Babe*.

The Bat Out of Hell Award goes to the aptly named *Batman Forever*. Enough's enough, Robin.

Ella Taylor is a film critic for LA Weekly.



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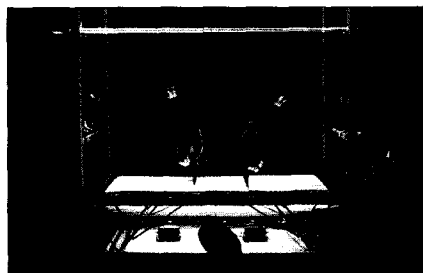
SAM EMERSON

Dance and Theater

BY AUSTIN BAER AND NANCY DALVA

ABOVE THE FLOOR AND ON THE EDGE

"S kudge. Dominoes. Body pop. Ex-flip. Inside-out. Suicide dive. Deadman. Slam." This is the movement vocabulary of Elizabeth Streb, the founder of the no-frills, high-thrills troupe known as Streb/Ringside. At a moment when a melancholic wave of Euro-style theatricality is washing over even the most restrained of American postmodernists, this daredevil choreographer holds the high ground by changing its definition. Streb has not only the desire to challenge gravity but the means: various equipment of her own devising, such as flying harnesses, springboards, and aerial platforms. Under Streb's command the floor is not the floor. The floor is a wall, a ledge, a box, a thirty-foot-tall six-inch-diameter pole, a set of panels, a springboard, or thin air itself. Down is up, up is every which way, and as for sideways—in Streb's work sideways is nonexistent, as at a rocket launch. Her latest ensemble piece, suitably titled *Up!*, employs six dancers, two twenty-foot towers, parallel bars positioned as high wires,



Testing the limits of dance

an Olympic-quality "hot bed" trampoline with a spring power of up to thirty feet, and some cushioned floor coverings—all at once. It is the rare work that is actually, rather than metaphorically, breathtaking.

This is not to say that Streb's pieces do not function as metaphors, both in the imagery they suggest from time to time (dolphins leaping, a cross, a woman trapped in a coffin) and in the nature of the enterprise itself. The choreography can be "read" as a commentary on the nature of dance and as a high-velocity meditation. (Streb's only scores



Streb prepares for *Action*

are the miked sounds triggered by the dancers as they hurtle into whatever solid object impedes a given trajectory.) The work recalls Salvador Dalí's marvelous painting *The Maximum Speed of Raphael's Madonna*. Just as Dalí exploded the Madonna's lovely face into a dazzling geometry, Streb translates planes, rectangles, and the angles of the hypotenuse into dazzling action.

This month Streb/Ringside's *Pop-Action* tour will make stops in San Antonio and Dallas (March 16, call 210-207-7211; March 22–23, call 214-768-3129), and in Seattle (March 28–30, call 206-543-4880). —N.D.

MIND MATTERS

Within the setting of a single stately home *Arcadia* swirls together—like jam and rice pudding—personages of the Romantic era and of the present day. Critics who admired Tom Stoppard's play on Broadway added that the script reads better than it plays, which is not much of a compliment. In *Arcadia*'s defense, it is a play of ideas. But to anyone who has absorbed (in a general way) the notions of entropy and fractals, or heard (in passing) of Fermat's lately proven theorem, the exposition of these matters will seem pedantic, and their application to



The set of the Broadway production

the dramatic narrative forced. Well, *Arcadia* made for plenty of animated cocktail chitchat, and now it is making the rounds. This month alone Chicago's Goodman Theatre and Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre reincarnate *Arcadia* on terms of their own. Next month new productions will follow in Pittsburgh and Chapel Hill. Maybe one of these will yet lift Stoppard's paper-thin chatterboxes off the written page and into the third dimension of flesh and blood. —A.B.

UP IN THE TOWER AND DREAMING

More bewildering, more metaphorical, and more ornate than *Oedipus*, Pedro Calderón de la Barca's Spanish Golden Age mystery *La vida es sueño* (*Life Is a Dream*) yet shares some of that primal tragedy's mythic power. Queen Clorilene of Poland is with child. King Basilio, a great reader of dreams and omens, foresees that she will bear a monster. Prince Segismundo is delivered amid ghastly portents, including the queen's death in childbirth. The boy grows up in chains in a lonely tower, tended only by a loyal tutor. And now the curtain rises. Basilio has decided to test the prophecies. He will bring the prince to court. If he displays a noble nature, he will resume his rightful place. If not, he will be returned forever to the tow-

er, his only comfort a lie: that he but dreamed. From this fantastical premise Calderón spins a riveting parable of free will and predestination, of nature versus nurture, of honor and betrayal, of the revenges of time. This month a production by New York City's bilingual Repertorio Español is on view both on tour in El Paso, Texas, and back home, just steps away from that Manhattan oasis of civility, Gramercy Park (call 212-889-2850 for dates). Performances are in Spanish, with simultaneous English

translations available on headset. Chances to see Calderón's disorienting dream play are like eclipses: rare and worth some trouble. —A.B.

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

Nancy Dalva is a contributor to *Dance Ink* and other publications.



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Classical Music

BY AUSTIN BAER

A JOY THAT TRANSCENDS UNDERSTANDING

The *Turangalila-Symphonie*,” Olivier Messiaen wrote of his composition, “is a love song... a hymn to joy... a joy that is superhuman, overflowing, blinding, unlimited. Love is present here in the same manner: this is a love that is fatal, irresistible, transcending everything... a love such as is symbolized by the philtre of Tristan and Yseult.”

These lines explain better than fumbling translations the import of the elusive Sanskrit title. The first to navigate the music’s stupendous seas was the Dionysian Leonard Bernstein, who must have reveled in its pounding swells and scented calms. That was with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, in 1949, and if the eighty-minute Technicolor rhapsody has yet to become a repertoire standard, the composer did live to hear it



Messiaen and his chosen conductor Chung

some 200 times around the world. Shortly before his death, in 1992, at the age of eighty-three, he experienced Myung-Whun Chung’s account with the Orchestre de la Bastille (recorded by Deutsche Grammophon) and pronounced it definitive. His approval shines bright on Chung’s ongoing exploration of the Messiaen canon, but should not

eclipse the achievement of other Messiaen disciples, prime among them Esa-Pekka Salonen, who recorded a resplendent account of the *Turangalila* with London’s Philharmonia Orchestra in 1986 (on CD from CBS Masterworks) and will revisit the

score next month with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, which he has molded into one of the most thrilling symphonic ensembles of our time (April 4-6; 213-365-3500).

AN ORCHESTRA NOT TO BE IGNORED

The New York-based Orpheus Chamber Orchestra plays without a conductor and gets world-class results, but you knew that. Not so many seasons ago these distinctions generated copious media coverage and caused the ensemble’s annual series at Carnegie Hall to sell out. But in this been-there-done-that age the Orpheus story seems to be losing a bit of its glow. Attendance at the Carnegie Hall series is a shade less good. Reviews around the world, though mostly golden, have become predictable. In short, Orpheus is starting to be taken for granted, which is not the fate its artists deserve. Of course, like all orchestra players, Orpheans must subordinate individuality to the artistic purpose of the group. But unlike most, Orpheans reserve to themselves the burden of defining that purpose and working it out through the cumbersome, exasperating medium of participatory democracy. This



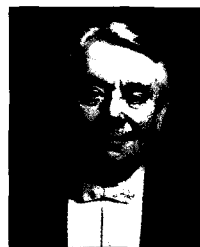
Orpheus deserves more

method precludes routine. If the story of Orpheus is by now a twice-told tale, the self-renewing splendor of its performances grows deeper and more radiant, as this month’s American tour should prove afresh to audiences in Columbia and Kansas City, Missouri; Naples and West Palm Beach, Florida; Chicago; and New York City (both Carnegie Hall and Town Hall). The repertoire runs from Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart to Tchaikovsky, Sibelius, and Mahler, with the world premiere of

Lee Hyla’s *Trans* extending the line up to the minute. Listeners at home have an Orpheus discography to choose from that is no less far-ranging. Good places to start include the revelatory accounts of Vivaldi’s thrice-familiar *Four Seasons* and the still-elusive modernist masterpieces of Charles Ives (Deutsche Grammophon).

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York.

KING OF THE CHORUS



It is probably safe to say that no one on this planet has delved deeper into the mysteries of choral singing than Robert Shaw. The honors that have come to him over a

long career have been legion. Perhaps none honors him more than the annual choral workshop established for Shaw by Carnegie Hall: an intensive week-long total immersion for choral professionals, culminating in towering performances of masterworks of the choral literature (documentary videotapes are available). Infinitely exacting, Shaw ruthlessly breaks music down to its elements of pitch, rhythm, articulation, and dynamics, each of which he polishes to perfection before effecting the grand synthesis (which even the Olympian maestro Arturo Toscanini found astonishing). Shaw’s sixth workshop, in January, was given over to Verdi’s awesome *Requiem*. On April 2 Shaw will return to Carnegie Hall with the Atlanta Symphony Chamber Chorus for Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*; on May 2, two days into his eightieth year, he will lead his own ensemble, the Robert Shaw Chamber Singers, in Rachmaninov’s otherworldly *Vespers* at New York’s Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (For tickets and videotapes call 212-247-7800.)

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This month’s Arts & Entertainment Preview is sponsored by Chrysler Corporation’s Chrysler/Plymouth division, also the sponsor of programming on The Discovery Channel. Watch for *Rediscovering America* (March 3 at 2:00 P.M. and March 19 at 10:00 P.M.).

Correct entries for the Arts & Entertainment Challenge will be eligible for a grand prize—*I Got Rhythm: The Music of George Gershwin*, the four-CD boxed set reviewed in our December issue (see attached card for details).

ANSWERS TO THE FEBRUARY CHALLENGE:

1. Thelonious Monk, Charles Williams, Bernard Hanighen
2. Charles Hardin Holley

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(Continued from page 34)

followed *U.S. v. Cruikshank*, which held that the federal government could not protect people from private infringement of their rights to assemble and bear arms. *Cruikshank*, decided in 1876, invalidated the federal convictions of participants in the lynching of two black men. This ruling, essentially concerned with limiting federal police power, is virtually irrelevant to Second Amendment debates today, although it has been cited to support the proposition that an oppressed minority has a compelling need (or a natural right) to bear arms in self-defense.

Hostility toward a powerful central government inspired the Second Amendment 200 years ago and fuels support for it today.

The most significant Supreme Court decision on the Second Amendment was *U.S. v. Miller* (1939), a less-than-definitive holding now cited approvingly by both sides in the gun-control debate. *Miller* involved a prosecution under the 1934 National Firearms Act. Jack Miller and his accomplice had been convicted of transporting an unregistered shotgun of less than regulation length across state lines. In striking down their Second Amendment claim and upholding their conviction, the Court noted that no evidence had been presented that a shotgun was in fact a militia weapon, providing no factual basis for a Second Amendment claim. This ruling implies that the Second Amendment could protect the right to bear arms suitable for a militia.

Advocates of gun control or prohibition like the *Miller* case because it makes the right to bear arms dependent on at least the possibility of service in a militia. They cite the Court's declaration that the Second Amendment was obviously intended to "assure the continuation and render possible the effectiveness" of state militias; they place less emphasis on the Court's

apparent willingness to permit private citizens to possess military weapons. Citing *Miller*, a dealer at a gun show told me that the Second Amendment protects the ownership of only such devices as machine guns, Stingers, and grenade throwers. But advocates of gun ownership don't generally emphasize this awkward implication of *U.S. v. Miller* any more than their opponents do: it could lead to prohibitions on handguns. They like the *Miller* decision because it delves into the history of the Second Amendment and stresses that for the framers, the militia "comprised all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense."

This view of the militia as an inchoate citizens' army, not a standing body of professionals, is central to the claim that the Second Amendment protects the rights of individual civilians, not simply the right of states to organize and arm militias. And, in fact, fear and loathing of standing armies did underlie the Second Amendment, which was at least partly intended to ensure that states would be able to call up citizens in defense against a tyrannical central government. (Like the Bill of Rights in general, the Second Amendment was partly a response to concerns about federal abuses of power.) James Madison, the author of the Second Amendment, invoked in *The Federalist Papers* the potential force of a citizen militia as a guarantee against a federal military coup.

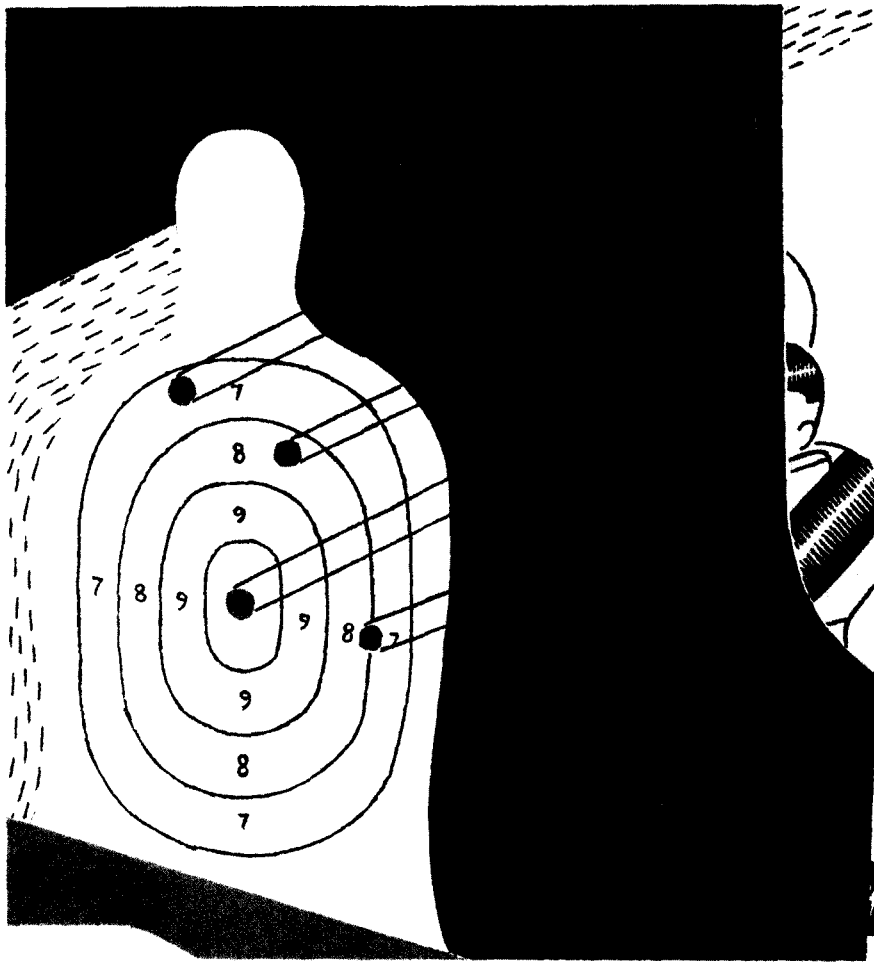
Let a regular army, fully equal to the resources of the country, be formed; and let it be entirely at the devotion of the federal government: still it would not be going too far to say that the State governments with the people on their side would be able to repel the danger. . . . To [the regular army] would be opposed a militia amounting to near half a million of citizens with arms in their hands, officered by men chosen from among themselves, fighting for their common liberties and united and conducted by governments possessing their affection and confidence. It may well be doubted whether a militia thus circumstanced could ever be conquered by such a proportion of regular troops. Those who are best acquainted with the late successful resistance of this country against the British arms will be most inclined to deny the possibility of it. Besides the advantage of being armed, which the Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation, the

existence of subordinate governments, to which the people are attached and by which the militia officers are appointed, forms a barrier against the enterprises of ambition, more insurmountable than any which a simple government of any form can admit of.

This passage is enthusiastically cited by advocates of the right to bear arms, because it supports their notion of the militia as the body of people, privately armed; but it's also cited by their opponents, because it suggests that the militia is activated and "conducted" by the states, and it stresses that citizens are "attached" to their local governments. The militia envisioned by Madison is not simply a "collection of unorganized, privately armed citizens," Dennis Henigan, a handgun-control advocate, has argued.

That Madison's reflections on the militia and the Supreme Court's holding in *U.S. v. Miller* can be cited with some accuracy by both sides in the debate testifies to the hybrid nature of Second Amendment rights. The Second Amendment presumes (as did the framers) that private citizens will possess private arms; Madison referred offhandedly to "the advantage of being armed, which the Americans possess." But Madison also implied that the right to bear arms is based in the obligation of citizens to band together as a militia to defend the common good, as opposed to the prerogative of citizens to take up arms individually in pursuit of self-interest and happiness.

THE tension at the heart of the Second Amendment, which makes it so difficult to construe, is the tension between republicanism and liberal individualism. (To put it very simply, republicanism calls for the subordination of individual interests to the public good; liberalism focuses on protecting individuals against popular conceptions of the good.) A growing body of scholarly literature on the Second Amendment locates the right to bear arms in republican theories of governance. In a 1989 article in the *Yale Law Journal* that helped animate the Second Amendment debate, the University of Texas law professor Sanford Levinson argued that the Second Amendment confers an individual right to bear arms so that, in the republican tradition, armed citizens might rise up against an oppressive state. Wendy Brown, a professor of women's studies at the Universi-



ty of California at Santa Cruz, and David C. Williams, a law professor at Cornell University, have questioned the validity of a republican right to bear arms in a society that lacks the republican virtue of being willing to put communal interests first. Pro-gun activists don't generally acknowledge the challenge posed by republicanism to the individualist culture that many gun owners inhabit. They embrace republican justifications for gun ownership, stressing the use of arms in defending the community, at the same time that they stress the importance of guns in protecting individual autonomy.

Advocates of the right to bear arms often insist that the Second Amendment is rooted in both collective and individual rights of self-defense—against political oppression and crime—without recognizing how those rights conflict. The republican right to resist oppression is the right of the majority, or the people, not the right of a small religious cult in Waco, Texas, or of a few survivalist tax protesters in Idaho. The members of these groups have individual rights against the government, state and federal. (Both the American Civil Lib-

erties Union and the NRA protested the government's actions in Waco and its attack on the survivalist Randy Weaver and his family.) But refuseniks and refugees from society are not republicans. They do not constitute the citizen militia envisioned by the framers, any more than they stand for the American community; indeed, they stand against it—withdrawing from the body politic, asserting their rights to alienation and anomie or membership in exclusionary alternative communities of their own. Republicanism can't logically be invoked in the service of libertarianism. It elevates civic virtue over individualism, consensus over dissent.

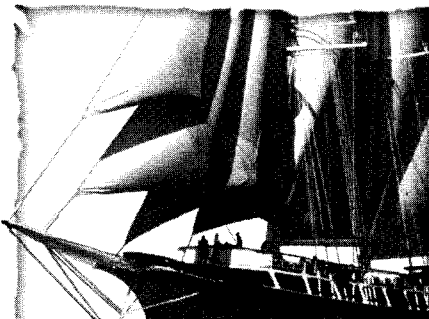
Nor can social-contract theory be readily invoked in support of a right to arm yourself in a war against street crime, despite the claims of some gun-ownership advocates. The right or power to engage in punishment or retribution is precisely what is given up when you enter an ordered civil society. The loss of self-help remedies is the price of the social contract. "God hath certainly appointed Government to restrain the partiality and violence of Men," John Locke wrote. A

person may always defend his or her life when threatened, but only when there is no chance to appeal to the law. If a man points his sword at me and demands my purse, Locke explained, I may kill him. But if he steals my purse by stealth and then raises a sword to defend it, I may not use force to get it back. "My Life not being in danger, I may have the *benefit of appealing* to the Law, and have Reparation for my 100 *l.* that way."

Locke was drawing a line between self-defense and vigilantism which many gun owners would no doubt respect. Others would point to the inability of the criminal-justice system to avenge crimes and provide reparation to victims, and thus they would assert a right to engage in self-help. Social-contract theory, however, might suggest that if the government is no longer able to provide order, or justice, the remedy is not vigilantism but revolution; the utter failure of law enforcement is a fundamental breach of trust. And, in fact, there are large pockets of disaffected citizens who do not trust the government to protect them or to provide impartial justice, and who might be persuaded to rise up against it, as evidenced by the disorder that followed the 1992 acquittal of police officers who assaulted Rodney King. Was Los Angeles the scene of a riot or of an uprising?

Injustice, and the sense of oppression it spawns, are often matters of perspective—particularly today, when claims of political victimization abound and there is little consensus on the demands of public welfare. We use the term "oppression" promiscuously, to describe any instance of discrimination. In this climate of grievance and hyperbole, many acts of violence are politicized. How do we decide whether an insurrection is just? Don Kates observes that the Second Amendment doesn't exactly confer the right to resist. He says, "It gives you a right to win."

The prospect of armed resistance, however, is probably irrelevant to much public support for gun ownership, which reflects a fear of crime more than a fear or loathing of government. People don't buy guns in order to overthrow or even to thwart the government; in the belief that the police can't protect them, people buy guns to protect themselves and their families. Recognizing this, the NRA appeals to fear of crime, particularly crime against women. ("Choose to refuse to be a vic-



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tim," NRA ads proclaim, showing a woman and her daughter alone in a desolate parking lot at night.) And it has countered demands for tougher gun controls not with radical individualist appeals for insurrection but with statist appeals for tougher anti-crime laws, notably stringent mandatory-minimum sentences and parole reform. There is considerable precedent for the NRA's appeal to state authority: founded after the Civil War, with the mission of teaching soldiers to shoot straight, in its early years the NRA was closely tied to the military and dependent on government largesse; until recently it drew considerable moral support from the police. Today, however, statist anti-crime campaigns are mainly matters of politics for the NRA and for gun advocates in general; laws mandating tough sentences for the criminal use of firearms defuse demands for firearm controls. Personal liberty—meaning the liberty to own guns and use them against the government if necessary—is these people's passion.

Gun advocates are apt to be extravagantly libertarian when the right to own guns is at stake. At heart many are insurrectionists—at least, they need to feel prepared. Nothing arouses their anger more, I've found, than challenges to the belief that private gun ownership is an essential check on political oppression.

DURING the two-day seminar held by Academics for the Second Amendment, we argue equanimously about nearly everything—crime control, constitutional rights, and the fairness and feasibility of gun controls—until I question whether, 200 years after the Revolution, citizens armed with rifles and handguns can effectively resist the federal government. I ask, If Nixon had staged a military coup in 1974—assuming he had military support—instead of resigning the presidency, could the NRA and the nation's unaffiliated gun owners have stopped him? For the first time in two days Don Kates flares up in anger, and the room is incandescent.

"Give me one example from history of a successful government oppression of an armed populace," he demands. The FBI raid on David Koresh's compound in Waco, Texas, doesn't count, he says, because Koresh's group was a small, isolated minority. The Civil War doesn't count either. (I can't remember why.) Neither do

uprisings in Malaysia and the Philippines.

People like me think it is possible to oppose the government only with nuclear weapons, Kates rages, because we're stupid; we don't understand military strategy and the effectiveness of guerrilla warfare, and we underestimate the hesitancy of troops to engage their fellow citizens in armed conflict. Millions of Americans armed only with pistols and long guns could turn a bloodless coup into a prolonged civil war.

Perhaps. I am almost persuaded that Kates might have a point, until he brings up the Holocaust.

Gun advocates sometimes point out that the Holocaust was preceded by gun-control laws that disarmed the Jews and made it easy to round them up. (In a 1994 article in *Guns and Ammo*, Jay Simkin, the president of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership, argued that gun control causes genocide. Simkin wrote that today "genocides can be prevented if civilians worldwide own military-type rifles and plenty of ammunition.") Kates doesn't go nearly this far, but he does point out that genocides are difficult to predict. At the turn of the century, he says, I would not have predicted the Holocaust, and today I can't predict what holocausts may occur in the next fifteen or fifty years. I give up. "If millions are slaughtered in the next fifty years because of gun-control laws," I declare, "let their deaths be on my head."

"It's very interesting that you say that," Kates concludes, a bit triumphantly.

Kates apologizes later for his outburst, and in a subsequent phone conversation he acknowledges that "the Holocaust was not an event where guns would have mattered; the force was overwhelming." But he adds that guns might have mattered to individual Jews who could have saved themselves had they been armed, even if the Jewish community couldn't have saved itself collectively. And guns might matter to a Croatian woman who shoots a Serbian soldier breaking into her house, he suggests; if there were a Second Amendment in Bosnia, it would protect her.

Zealots in the pro-gun camp (Kates is not among them) seem to identify with the woman defending her home to the extent that they fear attack by the federal government. "Using a national epidemic of crime and violence as their justification, media pundits and collectivist politi-

cians are aggressively campaigning to disarm private citizens and strengthen federal law enforcement powers," proclaims a special edition of *The New American*, a magazine on sale at gun shows. After gun control, the editors suggest, the greatest threat to individual liberty is the Clinton plan for providing local police departments with federal assistance. "Is it possible that some of those who are advocating a disarmed populace and a centralized police system have totalitarian designs in mind? It is worth noting that this is exactly what happened in many countries during this century."

This can be dismissed as ravings on the fringe, but it captures in crazed form the hostility toward a powerful central government which inspired the adoption of the Second Amendment right to bear arms 200 years ago and fuels support for it today. Advocates of First Amendment rights, who believe firmly that free speech is both a moral imperative and an instrument of democratic governance, should understand the passion of Second Amendment claims.

They should be sympathetic as well to the more dispassionate constitutional arguments of gun owners. Civil libertarians who believe that the Bill of Rights in general protects individuals have a hard time explaining why the Second Amendment protects only groups. They have a hard time reconciling their opposition to prohibitions of problematic behavior, such as drug abuse, with their support for the prohibition of guns. (Liberals tend to demonize guns and gun owners the way conservatives tend to demonize drugs and pornography and the people who use them.) In asserting that the Second Amendment provides no individual right to bear arms or that the right provided is anachronistic and not worth its cost, civil libertarians place themselves in the awkward position of denying the existence of a constitutional right because they don't value its exercise.

The civil-libertarian principles at issue in the gun debate are made clear by the arguments of First Amendment and Second Amendment advocates, which are strikingly similar—as are the arguments their opponents use. Pornography rapes, some feminists say. Words oppress, according to advocates of censoring hate speech. "Words Kill," declared a Planned Parenthood ad following the abortion-clinic

shootings in Brookline, Massachusetts, last year. And all you can say in response is "Words don't kill people; people kill people." To an anti-libertarian, the literature sold at gun shows may seem as dangerous as the guns; at a recent gun show I bought *Incendiaries*, an army manual on unconventional warfare; *Exotic Weapons: An Access Book*; *Gunrunning for Fun and Profit*; and *Vigilante Handbook*, which tells me how to harass, torture, and assassinate people. Should any of this material be censored? If it were, it would be sold on the black market; and the remedy for bad speech is good speech, First Amendment devotees point out. According to Second Amendment supporters, gun-control laws affect only law-abiding gun owners, and the best defense against armed criminals is armed victims; the remedy for the bad use of guns in violent crime is the good use of guns in self-defense.

Of course, guns do seem a bit more dangerous than books, and apart from a few anti-pornography feminists, most of us would rather be accosted by a man with a video than a man with a gun. But none of our constitutional rights are absolute. Recognizing that the Second Amendment confers an individual right to bear arms would not immunize guns from regulation; it would require that the government establish a necessity, not just a desire, to regulate. The majority of gun owners, Don Kates suggests, would be amenable to gun controls, such as waiting periods and even licensing and training requirements, if they didn't perceive them as preludes to prohibition. The irony of the Second Amendment debate is that acknowledging an individual right to bear arms might facilitate gun control more than denying it ever could.

But it will not facilitate civic engagement or the community that Americans are exhorted to seek. The civil-libertarian defense of Second Amendment rights is not a republican one. It does not derive the individual right to bear arms from republican notions of the militia; instead it relies on traditional liberal views of personal autonomy. It is a communitarian nightmare. If the war against crime has replaced the Cold War in popular culture, a private storehouse of guns has replaced the fallout shelter in the psyche of Americans who feel besieged. Increasingly barricaded, mistrustful of their neighbors, they've sacrificed virtue to fear. ☸

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Living in a van

RECENTLY I went around a small western city looking at used cars for sale. I needed a four-wheel-drive vehicle with room enough to sleep in. When I told the sellers this, they always said, "Yeah, I've slept in this," or "I've spent many a night in this." Then they would open up the back of the vehicle and we would stand with our hands in our pockets and contemplate its interior space—the fold-down seats, the carpet on the wheel wells—in companionable silence. Sometimes we would talk about what various cars are like to sleep in—about the relative comfort of a Chevy Blazer, say, where you can stretch out in the back, versus a Ford Bronco, where you have to lie diagonally. All the sellers were male and over twenty-one years old. In my experience, anyone in that category out west has spent a certain amount of time living in a car.

For me, the first time was in a blue Chevy van. The year I turned thirty, something came over me and I left my apartment in New York City and flew to northern Michigan and walked and hitchhiked

to a small town and bought a used van and paid a local mechanic who said he specialized in van conversions to put a bed and a fold-down desk in it. The pattern he chose for the back-window curtains exactly duplicated the tread mark of a heavy-duty tire. I lived in the van at a public campground for nine weeks or so, in the spring and early summer. During the days I read the middle volumes of *Remembrance of Things Past* on a hill above my campsite, and in the evenings I fished a nearby trout stream. One evening on the stream I met a good fisherman named Neal, and after

we had talked a while, he asked where I lived. I told him I lived in my van. "It's tough living out of your vehicle," he said, flicking his Marlboro butt into the current. Until then I hadn't considered whether living in a van was difficult or easy or anything at all. At night when I got up to go to the bathroom, I would turn on the overhead light dangling from its two wires, put on my shoes, climb over the front seat, open the driver's-side door, climb out, and close it with a sound that was singular and lonesome in the stillness. Sunrise in mid-

summer at that latitude was at about six o'clock, and as soon as the light hit the van's metal it started to tick, and the air inside got stuffy, and the sleeping flies awoke and headed for my nostrils. I would climb out unwillingly at six-fifteen with nothing to do but sit at the picnic table and yawn: a tough way to live, as I now saw.

I owned the van for four years and drove it all over the country—to both coasts, and to Canada and southern Texas. I had a real place to live, a house or an apartment, during that time, but the van was my second address. Living in it on the road was different from living in it at a campsite. At a campsite you get used to your surroundings over time, but on the road each new place you stop for the night has a strangeness that makes for fitful sleep. Ideally I wanted to stop before dark, so that I could take a wide-range view of the surroundings and dispel a recurring fear that I had accidentally parked on an airplane runway. But in practice I usually stopped after sunset and could judge my sleeping spot only by what showed in the headlights. I wanted places that were quiet but not scarily remote. I learned to identify and avoid lovers' lanes, which would crowd up with cars later on and draw cruising cops, and teen party spots, full of shouts and breaking glass and engine roar. Any edge-of-town place I stopped I always checked for cigarette-butt heaps and sacks of empty beer cans.

IF you spend a lot of time in your vehicle with the motor off, you will find that it has a consciousness like any quick thing. Just as a horse is aware of other horses, a car is aware of other cars. If you are parked by the side of the road and another car goes speeding by, your car will shiver in longing and sympathy. When a big truck passes, your car will flutter in awed excitement for minutes afterward. Even passing airplanes cause it to prick up its ears. Sleeping in a car is harder to do if the car is not itself asleep. For its comfort I always tried to park near other sleeping vehicles. Idling trucks snoring at a truck stop provided a good neighborhood. Once, not in the van but in a vehicle that succeeded it, I found myself in a western Nebraska town on the Saturday night after an important school football game, perhaps

the liveliest night the town would see all year. Parking on the streets was out of the question, police were high-beaming the town park, and no truck stops happened to be close by. Passing a used-car lot, I noticed an empty space in the back row. I pulled into it, shut down my lights and engine, and climbed into the back. Among the sleeping used cars my car and I spent as peaceful a night as we ever had.

WHEN you first get under your blankets or into your sleeping bag in your car, usually you lie quietly and just watch for a while. Your mind naturally will parse the lights and shadows filling the car's interior, will assign to each shadow its corresponding streetlight and to each moving plane of light the traffic pattern from which it comes. What you don't want at all is to have parked in a place where passing headlights fall right on your face. Also, for a while you listen—to engines near and farther away, to tires bumping over cattle guards, to wind. My van had leaky skylights, which I was always patching with sealant and waterproof tape, so in even the lightest rain I listened for drips. At the side of untraveled county roads I have tensed to the sound of my own stomach rumbling, so similar to the quiet crunch of gravel under the wheels of a car with headlights turned off, sneaking up to do me harm. But from a supine position inside a car you will never detect approaching people as easily as they will detect you. Once, parked in the parking lot of a railroad station, I woke to see a bearded man in multiple layers of clothes peering through the driver's-side window. For some reason I quickly grabbed a road map and became intent over it, as if I were a traveler who had paused only a moment to get his bearings. The bearded man rapped on the window and I reached across and rolled it down. "I seen you last night," he said reprovingly. "You sleep here, same as me."

Because your car is your main companion, your transportation, and your shelter twenty-four hours a day, you can develop a relationship with it that edges at times into the unhealthy. An early symptom is the anxiety that comes over you at the thought of being parted from your car for any duration. This makes engine breakdown and even simple tuneups events of greater stress than they would be for an average motorist. Once, near Canyon,

Texas, my van developed trouble in the solenoid. At unpredictable moments it wouldn't start. I took it to a service station, where it refused to start at all. A mechanic named Harry Buster examined it and told me what part I needed and that it would take a few days for him to get one. We rolled the van to his small lot out back and got to talking. Harry Buster was a descendant of the famous pioneer cattleman Oliver Loving, and knew many details of a battle Oliver Loving had with the Comanche which I had never read anywhere. At some point I offhandedly mentioned that of course I would be living in my van in his lot until the van was repaired. I have suppressed the memory of Mr. Buster's reaction to this news. I do know that I walked with my suitcase to the cheapest motel in Canyon and waited out the operation there.

WHEN I was little, my parents could drive great distances without tiring. They would load my brothers and sisters and me into the back of the station wagon and drive from our house in Ohio straight through until we were way out west. My father liked to drive at night; often we would go to sleep in one landscape and wake to find another, completely different, in its place. On our way back from Arizona one winter we went to bed with windows down in spring weather in the Ozarks and woke in a snowstorm someplace in Illinois. During the night Dad had rigged a long tubular duct out of a bedsheet and safety pins and attached it to a vent under the dashboard, to bring warm air to the back. I remember the ingenuity of this device, and us kids warm in our blankets, and the snow-covered farmland outside. I suppose that happy moments like that are what I hoped to reproduce as a grown-up spending the night in my car.

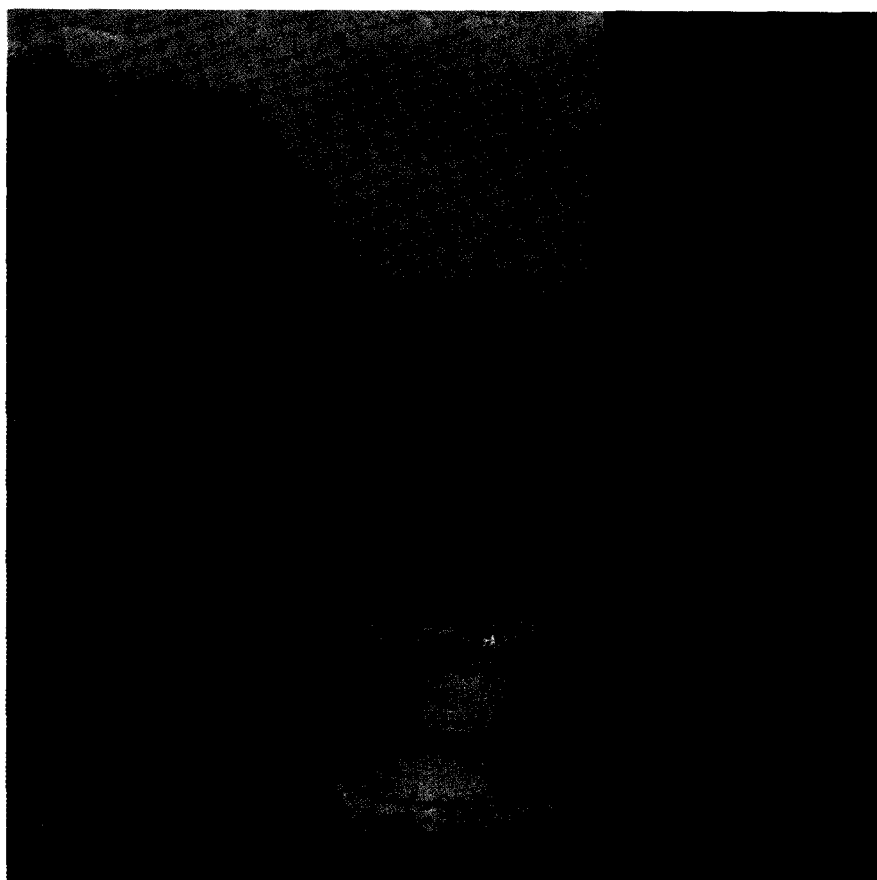
And, despite the frequent lonesomeness and strangeness of the experience, I sometimes succeeded. Falling asleep by a side road, I could feel as if I were a tiny part of something big, a corpuscle in a bloodstream. Though waking up in a motel room is always more or less the same, waking up in a car is different every time. The sunlight, the windshield vista, the morning sense of renewal, the thought of the forty dollars saved on a motel—all can combine to create an unexpected burst of exhilaration. Once, after spending a week with a person I was writing about

in San Antonio, I got in my van and drove 400 miles at night through the Texas Hill Country and onto the high plains. I pulled over, slept, woke at dawn, got out. The land was vast and flat, and the day empty of obligation. Sun streamed from the eastern horizon and the wind carried the smell of dust and cured hay. I drove to a café and ordered a big breakfast and began to eat. The waitress came to ask how everything was, and I said, "Great! Just great!" and she backed away from me cautiously, eyes wide.

Now the sight of junk cars makes me think of the hours people spent in them, driving and waking and sleeping. At a monster-truck car-crushing competition I went to—an event where souped-up pickup trucks with tires six feet across try to crush as many junk cars as they can—I looked through binoculars at an about-to-be-crushed sedan. Someone had left a magazine on the ledge behind the back seat, under the rear window. On the back cover of the magazine was an ad for a premium Scotch. The monster truck roared onto the sedan's trunk, all the sedan's tires went flat, its window imploded, and the forgotten magazine disappeared under shattered glass.

The time people spend in houses, the sense of life lived there, stays with the houses even as they fall apart. Lived-in houses, no matter how ramshackle, somehow remain animate, storied. But the time people spend in their cars seems to have no dignifying effect on the cars at all.

After I had driven my van for about 80,000 miles, I returned to New York for a while and left the van in a paid parking lot on a pier by the Hudson River. One day I came to check on it and saw that the doors were open. Thieves had broken in, and had cut parts from the engine. They had cranked open the skylights, too; the time of year was early summer, and I knew that they, like me, had found out how stuffy the van could get in the sun. I called a wrecker to come for the corpse. I imagined welding long steel spikes to the van's roof, so that it could never be used in a monster-truck car-crushing show. But I didn't actually do that, of course. I watched the van recede up the West Side Highway, tilted at that woeful angle behind the tow truck. I walked back to my apartment, surprised to discover that although my van was gone, apparently I was still in this world. ☼



In Full Bloom

*Strolling through an array of England's
private gardens*

WITH its gentle, misty climate, Britain has been welcoming gardeners for many centuries. Although the island has only a narrow range of native flora (the Ice Age left it quite barren), it's famous for pampering vegetative invaders. In the first century A.D. the Romans planted vineyards, avenues of chestnut trees, and rows of cabbages (who would have thought cabbage had ever been anything but English?). The transplants thrived. Every era since has added to a history rich in horticulture, with medieval monastic herb gardens, with exotic plants brought home in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

from expeditions to all parts of the globe, with the latest sweetly scented, disease-resistant hybrids from the contemporary rose breeder David Austin.

Gardening is the national art form, you might say. Whether in window boxes or on the back forty, more than 80 percent of all British households scratch the earth. Because the English understand, perhaps better than any other nationality, that lovely gardens deserve audiences, they are the creators of the National Gardens Scheme, in which some 3,500 private English and Welsh gardens are opened to the public each year, on given days or by appointment. Descrip-

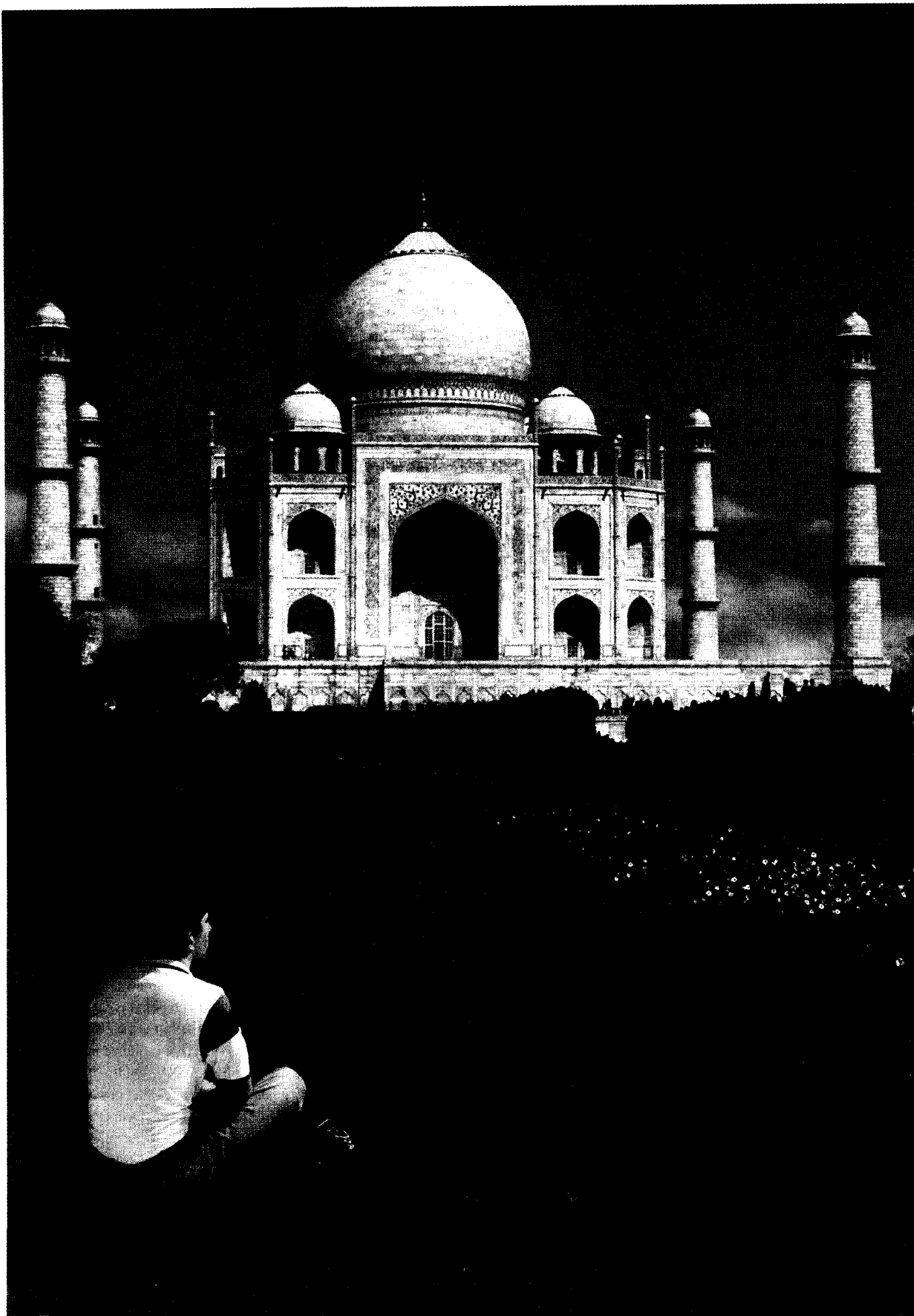
tions of the gardens, open dates, and directions are given in the NGS's Yellow Book, a paperback guide that regularly sells clean off bookstore shelves within a few weeks of its annual publication, in March. The Yellow Book can be ordered from the NGS, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Guildford, Surrey GU4 7RT, United Kingdom (send a check for \$18). Entrance fees are around £1.50 (\$2.30) per garden; the proceeds benefit various charities; tea is usually served.

What better way to get to know another people, I thought, than to join them at their favorite pastime? (I'd already visited many of the historic English estates, often a diminishing experience for the heritage-challenged American.) So last summer I made a tour of more than two dozen Yellow Book gardens, seeing some by myself and others with my friend Hope, a fellow New England gardener. On a blustery day last March, with a map of the UK spread out on my kitchen table, Hope and I charted a wide circular course through the Home Counties—the ones bordering greater London.

To pore over the Yellow Book in the chill of winter is to wallow in temptation. Each garden listed has been vetted by the NGS County Organizers and is said to offer at least forty-five minutes' worth of green interest. How were we to choose among "Tudor house with pond and cottage garden, Gertrude Jekyll water garden, pergola," "connections with Jane Austen who stayed here," "original Lutyens' design, herbaceous borders, ilex walk, avenues of limes," and "sub-tropical garden containing gingers, cannas, tree ferns, bananas, bamboos, on urban plot 40 by 20 feet"?

Coordinating the limited and seemingly random open days required studious cross-checking and slavish scrutiny of the map ("Are we looking for the Old Rectory near Maidstone, Kent, or the one near Maidenhead, Berkshire?" "Never mind—they're both closed in late June"). Fortunately, there's also the "By appointment" option for many gardens. To book rooms for each night, we flipped through Elizabeth and Walter Gundry's *Staying Off*

*At St. Paul's Walden Bury,
a landscape designed in 1730*



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the Beaten Track and the current Wolsey Lodges brochure. (Wolsey Lodges are private homes belonging to gentry who take in paying guests—in order, one assumes, to offset Lloyd's losses or contribute to boarding-school tuitions.) The brochure is available from Wolsey Lodges, 17 Chapel Street, Bildeston, Suffolk IP7 7EP. Ultimately we wrote to or telephoned a dozen garden owners to ask permission to visit on days that coincided with open days for other gardens in the area.

WE were welcomed warmly by all—although cautioned by Lady Heald. The ninety-year-old widow of Sir Lionel, Winston Churchill's attorney general in the fifties, warned us that her fields would be dreadfully trampled by the annual convention of Shelties that weekend. Did we mind? No. Not at all.

When the June afternoon arrived, Lady Heald escorted us personally along the walled terraces of Chilworth Manor; these had been laid out in 1720 by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. Regiments of tall scarlet penstemons with long tubular flowers filled the borders, a few blowzy pink peonies nodding and flirting within the ranks. These formal beds were clearly the hired gardener's domain, as were the lush plantings around eleventh-century stewponds, where monks once fattened fish for their table. But Lady Heald herself hadn't been able to resist domesticating the banks of a brook trickling through a boggy woodland below the garden. "Do come see my lovely ferns," she urged, and then she identified each filigreed one of them for us.

Snowy-haired and erect, our hostess tapped her cane against the trunk of a forty-three-year-old catalpa, the handsome Indian bean tree with skinny pods and heart-shaped leaves. "After the coronation and reception," she told us, "my husband and I toasted the young Queen's health, and then buried the champagne bottles right here with the program and menu rolled inside. Years from now, when the tree dies, I daresay those bottles will be auctioned off at Christie's."

Did we know, incidentally, of any American film companies that might want

to lease a manor house or a garden in Surrey for a movie set? When she inquired hopefully about our Hollywood connections, Lady Heald was cutting thick slices of sweet, sticky cake for tea. Alas, we were useless. Eyeing us suspiciously, James, the half-blind fourteen-year-old Jack Russell terrier, waited for his own generous hunk of cake, which Lady Heald dumped unceremoniously on the bottom shelf of the tea cart.

Many of the more ancient properties we saw appeared to be struggling, albeit imaginatively, under the burden of Britain's whopping inheritance taxes. The aura of decay hangs especially heavily on the houses and outbuildings. We saw orangeries in ruins and Edwardian green-



Iron gate and roses at St. Paul's Walden Bury

houses empty because of the high cost of heat. But where the kitchen gardens had been abandoned and the elaborate planting schemes scaled back, the charm of fraying grandeur still beguiled us.

Somehow our £4 donation to the National Gardens Scheme felt measly in comparison with the gracious introduction we were given to Chilworth Manor. The £1.6 million that the scheme netted last year was divided among seven national causes and numerous pet charities named by individual garden owners, including the Horses and Ponies Protection Association, the West Berkshire Marriage Guidance Trust, and the Church Fabric Fund. What a sensible arrangement—you have a look around a garden you would not ordinarily have access to,

and your money goes to a good cause.

Actually, my visit to St. Paul's Walden Bury, a formal woodland landscape designed in 1730, left me wondering where my money would end up. On the morning I visited (Hope had not yet joined me), a mist was rising from the beech-lined avenues that fan out into the Hertfordshire countryside, twenty-five miles north of London. From the imposing eighteenth-century brick house, which has belonged to the Bowes Lyon family for 250 years, long allées run north, one centered on the village church in the far distance and two others highlighting impressive statues of legendary Greeks: the goddess Diana with her quiver of arrows and a curly-haired Hercules.

At the time St. Paul's Walden Bury was designed, fashion dictated symmetry, rigid patterns, intersecting straight lines, perfectly circular pools. By the second half of the eighteenth century, however, these ideals were being edged out by a growing passion for wilderness, the renowned landscape architect Capability Brown being the great proponent of informal, natural-looking landscapes. With its towering wild oak woods littered with classical elements, St. Paul's Walden Bury refuses to fit neatly into a single school of landscape design and happily embraces both strict geometry and nature at its freest.

Not another visitor tramped the long grassy walks between clipped twelve-foot hedges, the stately avenue of lime trees, or the shady paths winding through rhododendron glens. Without a plan of the forty-acre property, I came upon each garden feature with surprise: a small octagonal pavilion; a Greek temple; stone sphinxes with faces that, I later learned, were modeled after the mistresses of Louis XV. On the bank of a neglected pond a duck had nested on a stone cherub riding a swan. Deeper in the woods a flock of startled white pigeons flapped up frantically from the trees.

The house, too, seemed deserted. Mildly interested in finding the honesty box for my admission fee ("Just make your own change, dearie," I'd been told on the phone), I paused to peer through a high, intricate wrought-iron gate off the main

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Stone-edged beds and climbing vines at the Nicholsons'

entrance. An elderly woman dressed in a flowered shirt, pedal pushers, and sneakers was leaning out of a golf cart to yank weeds from a flower bed. Then she moved to another spot, jabbed her cane in the dirt, and began yanking weeds again. Catching sight of me, she shouted over the din of three tiny yapping dogs, "Come in—come right in. What a pretty skirt. Now, can you tell me what this is, this pale apricot one just unfolding? A friend from Northumberland gave it to me, and it's never bloomed before."

It was a poppy (I didn't know what kind), the delicate crepe-paper petals almost transparent in the sun. A cloak of pink roses clung to the garden walls. Blue mounds of hardy geraniums, violets, twitching mauve poppy heads, spikes of purple salvia, spires of creamy foxglove, and the messy froth of lady's mantles' tiny lime-yellow flowers all crowded one another amiably—long, bright borders that the woman insisted I survey.

Reading the family history later, I realized that the spirited gardener in the golf cart was the Dowager Lady Bowes Lyon, the Queen's aunt. And it was she who breezily relieved me of my entrance fee and then some. I gave her a £10 note and never did get any change.

LONDON imposed challenges in getting to Yellow Book gardens. Because it was summer, many Londoners were out of town, their garden gates locked. Furthermore, having given up our rental car, Hope and I were making our way around the city on foot. It was, in fact, geography that led us to discover Shirley and David Nicholson's tiny colorful haven, just north of Holland Park. With twenty gardens in our wake, we needed to jump-start our enthusiasm on that first, scorching day of July. "Let's see, phlox are the specialty [we read from the book]—hmm, didn't even know there were more than twenty-five varieties. Well, it's only two blocks away."

The garden is approached through the French doors of the dining room; these open onto a wrought-iron balcony, from which a circular staircase winds gracefully down to a narrow band of paved terrace. A venerable old pear tree reaching for the sun creates a green canopy above



a small round table and four white chairs. From here the trellised and brick-walled garden extends back like a shoe box overflowing with lush vines and lovely masses of blossoms.

Clearly, this was a plantsman's garden, in which every vigorous leaf and fat bud was delighted with its lot in life. And there was another aesthetic at work too. We were not only drawn into this welcoming space but also immediately hooked by a lively color-and-light show. From a throw rug of grass next to the terrace we took in the tangle of deep-pink clematis and roses strangling the wall, inky-blue monkshood standing tall in the back border, cushions of silver hosta tucked farther away in deep shade, and magenta cranesbill flopping over the retaining wall at our feet. Each visual dance through the garden revealed a dozen new plants, a master's hand manipulating our attention. It came as no surprise to learn that Shirley Nicholson, our soft-spoken, Latin-spewing hostess and guide, had been trained as an architect and is the author of a National Trust garden book.

It seemed appropriate that the exquisite little plot should reflect, in miniature, the organizing principles that the architect Edwin Lutyens and the garden designer Ger-

trude Jekyll established in their gardens. For those grand affairs, created before the First World War, Lutyens laid out formal foundations and then Jekyll ran over them with galloping arrangements of plants. The Nicholsons' flowers, too, spilled from raised beds edged severely in stone. Hon-eyuckle, passionflower, and climbing nightshade draped themselves luxuriantly on trellises to mask the rigidity of tall parallel walls. Even the architectural lines of an outbuilding were blurred under a patched quilt of grape, clematis, and ivy.

Prowling through beautiful gardens is more fun if the people who shape them are on the scene, Hope and I concluded. But even when the owners weren't there to introduce us to Venus' fishing rod, dipping its blue-violet flowers, or to explain the mechanics of a homemade sweet-pea frame, we thought we could detect something of their personalities; the Yellow Book gardens feel lived in. Regrettably, the geniuses behind Sissinghurst Castle, Hixdote Manor, and Hampton Court Palace are long gone. Those gardens are, nevertheless, not to be missed. But if you're longing for an intimate look at living art, pick up a Yellow Book. Wander among the English in their most sensible shoes and comfortable clothes. ☼

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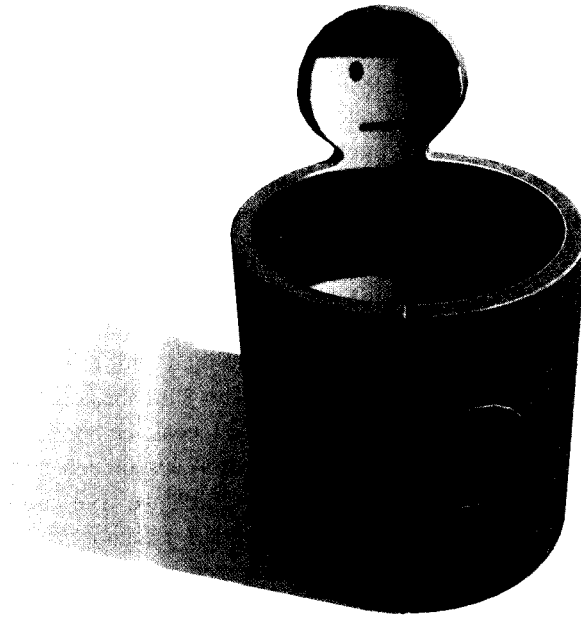
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AMERICA'S SEARCH FOR A NEW PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

by MICHAEL J. SANDEL



Despite their disagreements, liberals and conservatives share an impoverished vision of citizenship, leaving them unable to address the anxiety and frustration abroad in the land. If American politics is to recover its civic voice, it must find a way to debate questions we have forgotten how to ask

AS another presidential election season unfolds, Americans remain frustrated with politics and unhappy with the alternatives the parties have to offer. Our public life is rife with discontent. President Clinton, who recently spoke of trying to lift Americans from their national "funk," attributes the discontent to the insecurity of jobs in the global economy. His solution is to equip Americans, through federally supported education and job-training programs, to "compete and win" in the global economy. Republicans, on the other hand, interpret the discontent as unhappiness with big government. Their solution is to scale back the federal government, reduce regulation, and devolve power to states and localities.

The problem, though, runs deeper than these diagnoses suggest; it concerns the public philosophy by which we live and the conception of citizenship that informs our political debates. American politics has lost its civic voice. Despite their disagreements, liberals and conservatives share an impoverished vision of citizenship, leaving them unable to address the anxiety and frustration abroad in the land.

For the past half century Democrats and Republicans have debated the role of government in the market economy and the proper scope of rights and entitlements. But this debate does not speak to the two concerns at the heart of our discontent. One is the fear that, individually and collectively, we are losing control of the forces that govern our lives. The

other is the sense that, from family to neighborhood to nation, the moral fabric of community is unraveling around us. These two fears define the anxiety of the age.

LIBERAL VERSUS REPUBLICAN FREEDOM

THE central idea of the public philosophy by which we live is that freedom consists in our capacity to choose our ends for ourselves. Politics should not try to form the character or cultivate the virtue of its citizens, for to do so would be to “legislate morality.” Government should not affirm, through its policies or laws, any particular conception of the good life; instead it should provide a neutral framework of rights within which people can choose their own values and ends.

The aspiration to neutrality finds prominent expression in our politics and law. Although it derives from the liberal tradition of political thought, its province is not limited to those known as liberals, rather than conservatives, in American politics; it can be found across the political spectrum. Liberals invoke the ideal of neutrality when opposing school prayer or restrictions on abortion or attempts by Christian fundamentalists to bring their morality into the public square. Conservatives appeal to neutrality when opposing attempts by government to impose certain moral restraints—for the sake of workers’ safety or environmental protection or distributive justice—on the operation of the market economy.

The ideal of free choice also figures on both sides of the debate over the welfare state. Republicans have long complained that taxing the rich to pay for welfare programs for the poor is a form of coerced charity that violates people’s freedom to choose what to do with their own money. Democrats have long replied that government must assure all citizens a decent level of income, housing, education, and health care, on the grounds that those who are crushed by economic necessity are not truly free to exercise choice in other domains. Despite their disagreement about how government should act to respect individual choice, both sides assume that freedom consists in the capacity of people to choose their own ends.

So familiar is this vision of freedom that it might seem a permanent feature of the American political tradition. But as a reigning public philosophy, it is a recent arrival, a development of the past half century. Its distinctive character can best be seen by comparison with a rival public philosophy that it gradually displaced: a version of republican political theory.

Central to republican theory is the idea that liberty depends on sharing in self-government. This idea is not by itself inconsistent with liberal freedom. Participating in politics can be one among the ways in which people choose to pursue their individual ends. According to republican polit-

ical theory, however, sharing in self-rule involves something more. It involves deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good and helping to shape the destiny of the political community. But to deliberate well about the common good requires more than the capacity to choose one’s ends and to respect others’ rights to do the same. It requires a knowledge of public affairs and also a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake. To share in self-rule therefore requires that citizens possess, or come to acquire, certain civic virtues. But this means that republican politics cannot be neutral toward the values and ends its citizens espouse. The republican conception of freedom, unlike the liberal conception, requires a formative politics, a politics that cultivates in citizens the qualities of character that self-government requires.

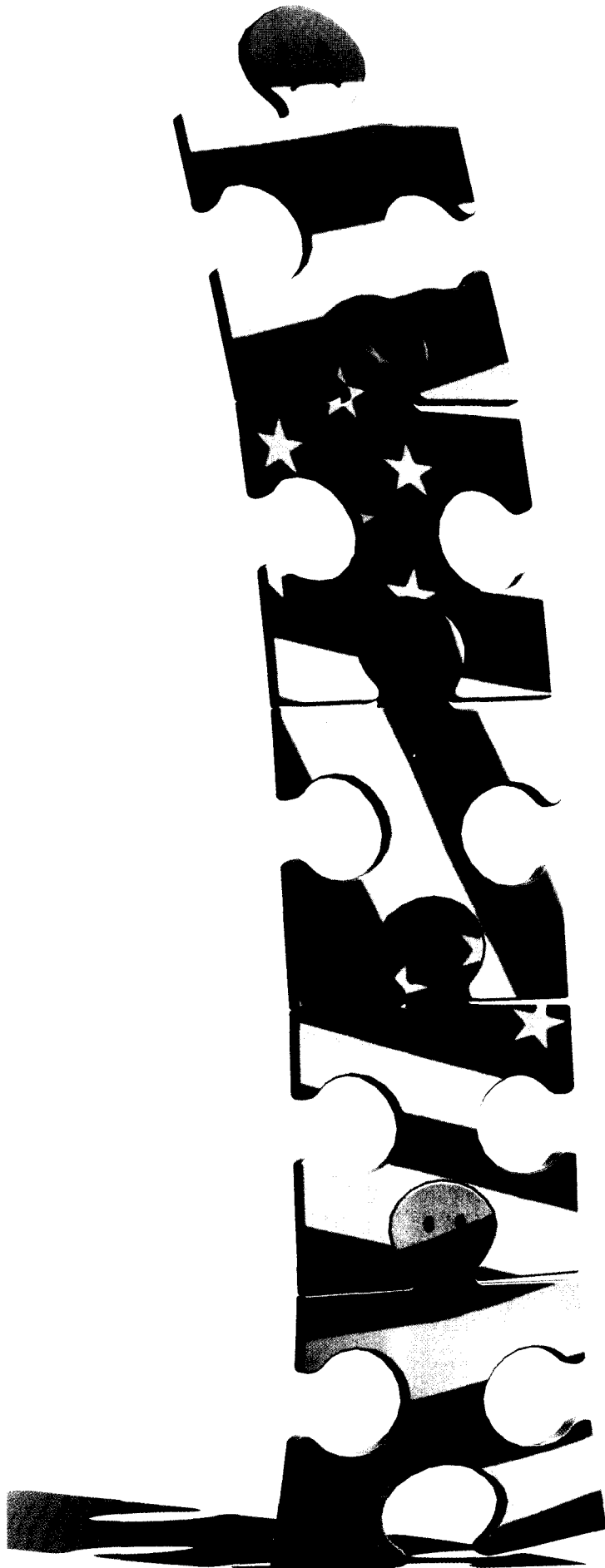
Both the liberal and the republican understandings of freedom have been present throughout our political experience, but in shifting measure and relative importance. In recent decades the civic, or formative, aspect of our politics has given way to a procedural republic, concerned less with cultivating virtue than with enabling persons to choose their own values. This shift sheds light on our present discontent. For despite its appeal, the liberal vision of freedom lacks the civic resources to sustain self-government. The public philosophy by which we live cannot secure the liberty it promises, because it cannot inspire the sense of community and civic engagement that liberty requires.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CITIZENSHIP

IF American politics is to recover its civic voice, it must find a way to debate questions we have forgotten how to ask. Consider the way we think and argue about economics today, in contrast to the way Americans debated economic policy through much of our history. These days most of our economic arguments revolve around two considerations: prosperity and fairness. Whatever tax policies or budget proposals or regulatory schemes people may favor, they usually defend them on the grounds that they will increase the size of the economic pie or distribute the pieces of the pie more fairly or both.

So familiar are these ways of justifying economic policy that they might seem to exhaust the possibilities. But our debates about economic policy have not always focused solely on the size and the distribution of the national product. Throughout much of American history they have also addressed a different question: What economic arrangements are most hospitable to self-government?

Thomas Jefferson gave classic expression to the civic strand of economic argument. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) he argued against developing large-scale domestic manufactures on the grounds that the agrarian way of



life made for virtuous citizens, well suited to self-government. "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God," he wrote—the embodiments of "genuine virtue." The political economists of Europe claimed that every nation should manufacture for itself, but Jefferson worried that large-scale manufacturing would create a propertyless class, lacking the independence that republican citizenship requires: "Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition." Jefferson thought it better to "let our work-shops remain in Europe" and avoid the moral corruption they brought; better to import manufactured goods than the manners and habits that attended their production. "The mobs of great cities add just so much to the support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body," he wrote. "It is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution."

Whether to encourage domestic manufacturing or to retain the nation's agrarian character was the subject of intense debate in the early decades of the republic. In the end, Jefferson's agrarian vision did not prevail. But the republican assumption underlying his economics—that public policy should cultivate the qualities of character that self-government requires—found broader support and a longer career. From the Revolution to the Civil War the political economy of citizenship played a prominent role in American national debate. In fact, the civic strand of economic argument extended even into the twentieth century, when Progressives grappled with big business and its consequences for self-government.

THE CURSE OF BIGNESS

THE political predicament of the Progressive Era bears a striking similarity to our own. Then as now, Americans sensed the unraveling of community and feared for the prospects of self-government. Then as now, there was a gap, or a lack of fit, between the scale of economic life and the terms in which people conceived their identities—a gap that many experienced as disorienting and disempowering. The threat to self-government at the turn of the century took two forms: the concentration of power amassed by giant corporations, and the erosion of those traditional forms of authority and community that had governed the lives of most Americans through the first century of the republic. A national economy dominated by vast cor-

THE central idea of the public philosophy by which we live is that politics should not try to cultivate the virtue of its citizens, for to do so would be to “legislate morality.” But as a reigning public philosophy, this is a recent arrival, a development of the past half century.

porations diminished the autonomy of local communities, traditionally the site of self-government. Meanwhile, the growth of large, impersonal cities, teeming with immigrants, poverty, and disorder, led many to fear that Americans lacked sufficient moral and civic cohesiveness to govern according to a shared vision of the good life.

Despite the dislocation they wrought, the new forms of industry, transportation, and communication seemed to offer a new, broader basis for political community. In many ways Americans of the early twentieth century were more closely connected than ever before. Railroads spanned the continent. The telephone, the telegraph, and the daily newspaper brought people into contact with events in distant places. And a complex industrial system connected people in a vast scheme of interdependence that coordinated their labors. Some saw in the new industrial and technological interdependence a more expansive form of community. “Steam has given us electricity and has made the nation a neighborhood,” wrote William Allen White. “The electric wire, the iron pipe, the street railroad, the daily newspaper, the telephone, the lines of transcontinental traffic by rail and water . . . have made us all of one body—socially, industrially, politically. . . . It is possible for all men to understand one another.”

More sober observers were not so sure. That Americans found themselves implicated in a complex scheme of interdependence did not guarantee that they would identify with that scheme or come to share a life with the unknown others who were similarly implicated. As the social reformer Jane Addams observed, “Theoretically, ‘the division of labor’ makes men more interdependent and human by drawing them together into a unity of purpose.” But whether this unity of purpose is achieved depends on whether the participants take pride in their common project and regard it as their own; “the mere mechanical fact of interdependence amounts to nothing.”

Political debate in the Progressive Era focused on two different responses to the power of big business. Some sought to preserve self-government by decentralizing economic power and thus bringing it under democratic control. Others considered economic concentration irreversible and sought to control it by enlarging the capacity of national democratic institutions. The decentralizing strand of progressivism found its ablest advocate in Louis D. Brandeis, who before

his appointment to the Supreme Court was an activist attorney and an outspoken critic of industrial concentration. Brandeis’s primary concern was with the civic consequences of economic arrangements. He opposed monopolies and trusts not because their market power led to higher consumer prices but because their political power undermined democratic government.

In Brandeis’s view, big business threatened self-government in two ways—directly, by overwhelming democratic institutions and defying their control, and indirectly, by eroding the moral and civic capacities that equip workers to think and act as citizens. Brandeis brought long-standing republican themes into the twentieth-century debate: like Jefferson, he viewed concentrated power, whether economic or political, as inimical to liberty. His solution was not to confront big business with big government—that would only compound “the curse of bigness”—but to break up the trusts and restore competition. Only in this way would it be possible to preserve a decentralized economy of locally based enterprises amenable to democratic control.

Brandeis favored industrial democracy not for the sake of improving workers’ incomes, desirable though that was, but for the sake of improving their civic capacities. For him, the formation of citizens capable of self-government was an end even higher than distributive justice. “We Americans are committed not only to social justice in the sense of avoiding . . . [an] unjust distribution of wealth; but we are committed primarily to democracy.” The “striving for democracy” was inseparable from a “striving for the development of men,” he said. “It is absolutely essential in order that men may develop that they be properly fed and properly housed, and that they have proper opportunities of education and recreation. We cannot reach our goal without those things. But we may have all those things and have a nation of slaves.”

THE NEW NATIONALISM

THE other branch of the Progressive movement offered a different response to the threat posed by corporate power. Rather than decentralize the economy, Theodore Roosevelt proposed a “New Nationalism” to regulate big business by increasing the capacity of the national government.

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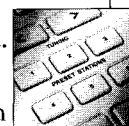
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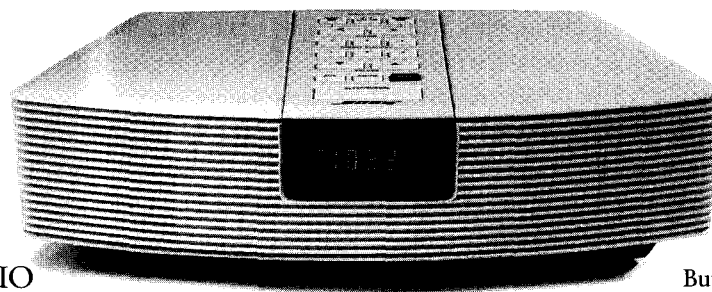
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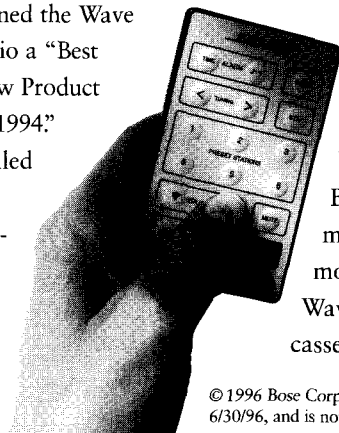
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Like Brandeis, Roosevelt feared the political consequences of concentrated economic power. Where Roosevelt disagreed with the decentralizers was over how to reassert democratic authority. He considered big business an inevitable product of industrial development and saw little point in trying to recover the decentralized political economy of the nineteenth century. Since most big corporations operated in interstate or foreign commerce, beyond the reach of individual states, only the federal government was suited to the task of controlling them. The power of the national government had to grow to match the scale of corporate power.

Like republicans since Jefferson's time, Roosevelt worried about the civic consequences of economic arrangements. His aim was not only to reduce the domination of government by big business but also to enlarge the self-understanding of American citizens, to instill what he called "a genuine and permanent moral awakening," "a spirit of broad and far-reaching nationalism." More than a program of institutional reform, the New Nationalism was a formative project that sought to cultivate a new sense of national citizenship.

Roosevelt was the leading spokesman for the New Nationalism; Herbert Croly was its leading philosopher. In *The Promise of American Life* (1909), Croly laid out the political theory underlying the nationalist strand of progressivism: given "the increasing concentration of American industrial, political, and social life," American government "demands more rather than less centralization." But, according to Croly, the success of democracy also required the nationalization of politics. The primary form of political community had to be recast on a national scale. This was the way to ease the gap, felt so acutely in the Progressive Era, between the scale of American life and the terms of American identity. Given the national scale of the modern economy, democracy required "an increasing nationalization of the American people in ideas, in institutions, and in spirit."

Although Croly renounced Jefferson's notion that democracy depends on dispersed power, he shared Jefferson's conviction that economic and political arrangements should be judged by the qualities of character they promote. For him, the project of nationalizing the American character was "an essentially formative and enlightening political transformation." American democracy could advance only as the nation became more of a nation, which required in turn a civic education that inspired in Americans a deeper sense of national identity.

The decentralizing and nationalizing versions of Progressive reform found memorable expression in the 1912 contest between Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt. In retrospect, however, the greater significance of that campaign lies in the assumptions the protagonists shared. Brandeis and Wilson on one side, and Croly and Roosevelt on the other, agreed despite their differences that economic and political

institutions should be assessed for their tendency to promote or erode the moral qualities that self-government requires. Like Jefferson before them, they worried about the sort of citizens that the economic arrangements of their day were likely to produce. They argued, in different ways, for a political economy of citizenship.

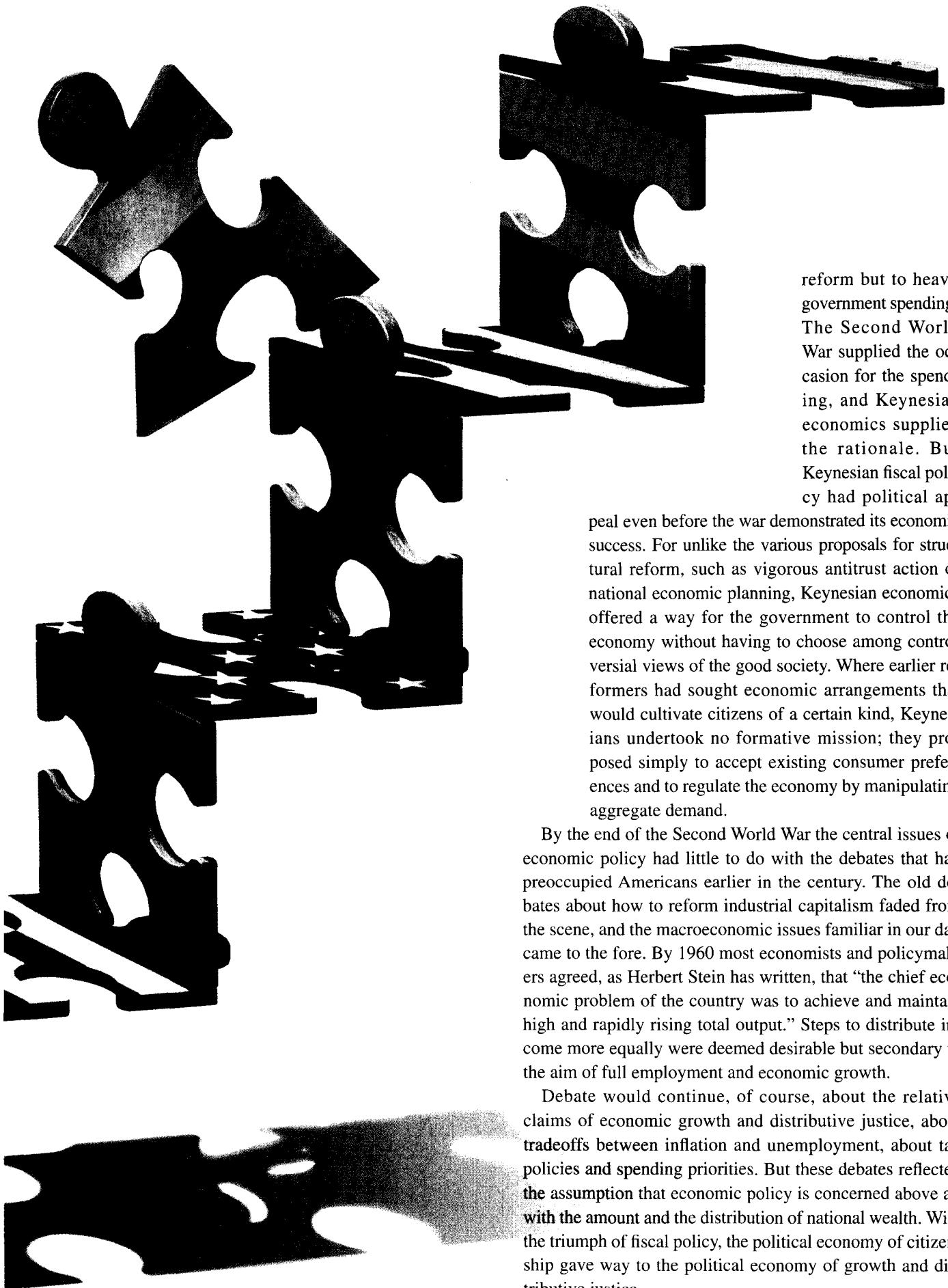
The economic arguments of our day bear little resemblance to the issues that divided the Progressive reformers. They were concerned with the structure of the economy and debated how to preserve democratic government in the face of concentrated economic power. We are concerned with the overall level of economic output and debate how to promote economic growth while assuring broad access to the fruits of prosperity. In retrospect it is possible to identify the moment when our economic questions displaced theirs. Beginning in the late New Deal and culminating in the early 1960s the political economy of growth and distributive justice displaced the political economy of citizenship.

THE NEW DEAL AND THE KEYNESIAN REVOLUTION

AS the New Deal began, political debate continued to reflect the alternatives defined in the Progressive Era. When Franklin D. Roosevelt took office, in the midst of the Depression, two traditions of reform offered competing approaches to economic recovery. One group of reformers, heirs to the philosophy of Louis Brandeis, sought to decentralize the economy through antitrust laws and other measures aimed at restoring competition. Another group, indebted to the New Nationalism of Teddy Roosevelt, sought to rationalize the economy through national economic planning. Despite their differences, both the antitrusters and the planners assumed that overcoming the Depression required a change in the structure of industrial capitalism. They also agreed that the concentration of power in the economy, left to its own devices, posed a threat to democratic government.

The competition between these approaches persisted, unresolved, through much of the New Deal. In different policies and different moods Roosevelt experimented with both, never fully embracing or rejecting either. In the end neither the antitrusters nor the planners prevailed. Recovery, when it came, was due not to structural





reform but to heavy government spending. The Second World War supplied the occasion for the spending, and Keynesian economics supplied the rationale. But Keynesian fiscal policy had political ap-

peal even before the war demonstrated its economic success. For unlike the various proposals for structural reform, such as vigorous antitrust action or national economic planning, Keynesian economics offered a way for the government to control the economy without having to choose among controversial views of the good society. Where earlier reformers had sought economic arrangements that would cultivate citizens of a certain kind, Keynesians undertook no formative mission; they proposed simply to accept existing consumer preferences and to regulate the economy by manipulating aggregate demand.

By the end of the Second World War the central issues of economic policy had little to do with the debates that had preoccupied Americans earlier in the century. The old debates about how to reform industrial capitalism faded from the scene, and the macroeconomic issues familiar in our day came to the fore. By 1960 most economists and policymakers agreed, as Herbert Stein has written, that "the chief economic problem of the country was to achieve and maintain high and rapidly rising total output." Steps to distribute income more equally were deemed desirable but secondary to the aim of full employment and economic growth.

Debate would continue, of course, about the relative claims of economic growth and distributive justice, about tradeoffs between inflation and unemployment, about tax policies and spending priorities. But these debates reflected the assumption that economic policy is concerned above all with the amount and the distribution of national wealth. With the triumph of fiscal policy, the political economy of citizenship gave way to the political economy of growth and distributive justice.



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THESE days most of our economic arguments revolve around two considerations: prosperity and fairness. But throughout much of American history they have also addressed a different question: What economic arrangements are most hospitable to self-government?

KEYNESIANISM AND LIBERALISM

THE advent of the new political economy marked a decisive moment in the demise of the republican strand of American politics and the rise of contemporary liberalism. According to this liberalism, government should be neutral as to conceptions of the good life, in order to respect persons as free and independent selves, capable of choosing their own ends. Keynesian fiscal policy both reflected this liberalism and deepened its hold on American public life. Although those who practiced Keynesian economics did not defend it in precisely these terms, the new political economy displayed two features of the liberalism that defines the procedural republic. First, it offered policymakers and elected officials a way to “bracket,” or set aside, controversial views of the good society, and so promised a consensus that programs for structural reform could not offer. Second, by abandoning the formative project, it denied government a stake in the moral character of its citizens and affirmed the notion of persons as free and independent selves.

The clearest expression of faith in the new economics as a neutral instrument of national governance was offered by President John F. Kennedy. In a commencement address at Yale University in 1962 he argued that modern economic problems could best be resolved if people set aside their ideological convictions. “The central domestic issues of our time,” he observed, “are more subtle and less simple” than the large moral and political issues that commanded the nation’s attention in earlier days. “They relate not to basic clashes of philosophy or ideology but to ways and means of reaching common goals. . . . What is at stake in our economic decisions today is not some grand warfare of rival ideologies which will sweep the country with passion but the practical management of a modern economy.” Kennedy urged the country “to face technical problems without ideological preconceptions” and to focus on “the sophisticated and technical questions involved in keeping a great economic machinery moving ahead.”

As Keynesian fiscal policy took hold in the 1960s, the civic strand of economic argument faded from American political discourse. Confronted with an economy too vast to admit republican hopes of mastery, and tempted by the

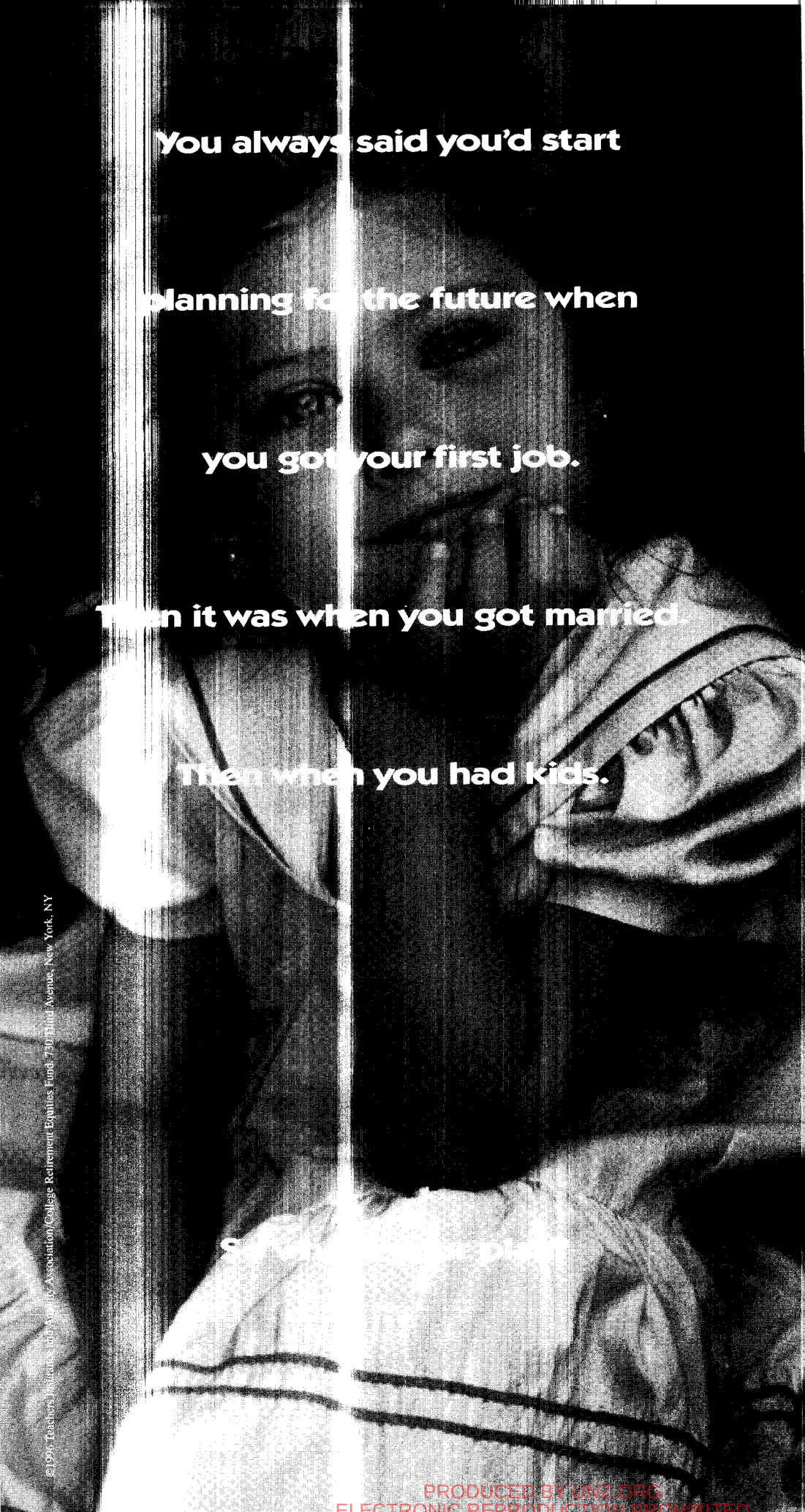
prospect of prosperity, Americans of the postwar decades found their way to a new understanding of freedom. According to this understanding, our liberty depends not on our capacity as citizens to share in shaping the forces that govern our collective destiny but rather on our capacity as persons to choose our values and ends for ourselves.

From the standpoint of republican political theory, this shift represents a fateful concession; to abandon the formative ambition is to abandon the project of liberty as the republican tradition conceives it. But Americans did not experience the new public philosophy as disempowering—at least not at first. To the contrary, the procedural republic appeared to be a triumph of mastery and self-command. This was owing partly to the historical moment and partly to the promise of the liberal conception of freedom.

THE MOMENT OF MASTERY

THE procedural republic was born at a rare moment of American mastery. At the end of the Second World War the United States stood astride the world, an unrivaled global power. This power, combined with the buoyant economy of the postwar decades, accustomed a generation of Americans to seeing themselves as masters of their circumstances. John Kennedy’s inaugural address gave stirring expression to a generation’s conviction that it possessed powers of Promethean proportions. “The world is very different now,” Kennedy proclaimed. “For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life.” We would “pay any price, bear any burden,” to assure the success of liberty.

Beyond the bounty of American power, the promise of mastery in the postwar decades had another source in the public philosophy of contemporary liberalism itself. The image of persons as free and independent selves, unbound by moral or communal ties they have not chosen, is a liberating, even exhilarating, ideal. Freed from the dictates of custom or tradition, the liberal self is installed as sovereign, cast as the author of the only obligations that constrain. This image of freedom found expression across the political spectrum. Lyndon Johnson argued the case for the welfare state not in terms of communal obligation but instead in terms of



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enabling people to choose their own ends: "For more than thirty years, from Social Security to the war against poverty, we have diligently worked to enlarge the freedom of man," he said upon accepting the 1964 Democratic presidential nomination. "And as a result Americans tonight are freer to live as they want to live, to pursue their ambitions, to meet their desires . . . than at any time in all of our glorious history." Welfare-rights advocates opposed work requirements, mandatory job training, and family-planning programs for welfare recipients on the grounds that all people, including the poor, "should have the freedom to choose how they may express the meaning of their lives." For their part, conservative critics of Johnson's Great Society also made their arguments in the name of the liberal conception of freedom. The only legitimate functions of government, Barry Goldwater insisted, were those that made it "possible for men to follow their chosen pursuits with maximum freedom." The libertarian economist Milton Friedman opposed Social Security and other mandatory government programs on the grounds that they violated people's rights "to live their lives by their own values."

And so for a time the special circumstances of American life obscured the passing of the civic concept of freedom. But when the moment of mastery expired—when, in 1968, Vietnam, riots in the ghettos, campus unrest, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy brought a shattering of faith—Americans were left ill equipped to contend with the dislocation that swirled about them. The liberating promise of the freely choosing self could not compensate for the loss of self-government more broadly conceived. Events spun out of control at home and abroad, and government seemed helpless to respond.

REAGAN'S CIVIC CONSERVATISM

THERE followed a season of protest that is with us still. As disillusionment with government grew, politicians groped to articulate the frustrations that the reigning political agenda did not address. The most successful, at least in electoral terms, was Ronald Reagan. Although he ultimately failed to allay the discontent he tapped, it is instructive nonetheless to consider the source of his appeal and the way it departed from the prevailing terms of political discourse.

Reagan drew, in different moods and moments, on both the libertarian and the civic strands of American conservatism. The most resonant part of his political appeal derived from the second of these, from his skillful evocation of communal values such as family and neighborhood, religion and patriotism. What set Reagan apart from laissez-faire conservatives also set him apart from the public philosophy of his day: his ability to identify with Americans' yearnings for a common life of larger meanings on a smaller, less impersonal scale than that the procedural republic provides.

Reagan blamed big government for disempowering citizens and proposed a "New Federalism" that would shift power to states and localities, recalling the long-standing republican worry about concentrated power. But Reagan revived this tradition with a difference. Previous advocates of republican political economy had worried about big government and big business alike. For Reagan, the curse of bigness attached to government alone. Even as he evoked the ideal of community, he had little to say about the corrosive effects of capital flight or the disempowering consequences of economic power organized on a vast scale.

HORSES

Setting out on my bicycle alone,
I came upon the horses
drenched in bright sunshine,
yard after yard of blue-black ironed silk,
drawn before stopped traffic.

With white stars on their foreheads
and white bracelets on their legs,
each blood horse wore nothing
but a fine noseband
and a shroud of steam.

I felt lazy and vicious watching them,
with my large joints and big head,
stricken by thoughts of my brothers.
If only the barbarous horsemen
could lead *us* down the path, unestranged.

It smashed me like water galloped through.
Tottering there on my haunches,
with wide nostrils,
nipping the air as if it were green grass,
how I yearned for my neck to be brushed!

—HENRI COLE

Reagan-era Democrats did not challenge Reagan on this score, nor did they otherwise join the debate about community and self-government. Tied to the terms of rights-oriented liberalism, they missed the mood of discontent. The anxieties of the age concerned the erosion of those communities intermediate between the individual and the nation—families and neighborhoods, cities and towns, schools and congregations. But Democrats, once the party of dispersed power, had learned in recent decades to view intermediate communities with suspicion. Too often such communities had been pockets of prejudice, outposts of intolerance, places where the tyranny of the majority held sway. And so, from the New Deal to the civil-rights movement to the Great Society, the liberal project was to use federal power to vindicate individual rights that local communities had failed to protect. This unease with the middle terms of civic life, however honorably acquired, left Democrats ill equipped to attend to the erosion of self-government.

The civic strand of Reagan's rhetoric enabled him to succeed, where Democrats failed, in tapping the mood of discontent. In the end, however, Reagan's presidency did little to alter the conditions underlying the discontent. He governed more as a market conservative than as a civic conservative. The unfettered capitalism he favored did nothing to repair the moral fabric of families, neighborhoods, and communities and much to undermine them.

THE RISKS OF REPUBLICAN POLITICS

ANY attempt to revitalize the civic strand of freedom must confront two sobering objections. The first doubts that it is possible to revive republican ideals; the second doubts that it is desirable. The first objection holds that given the scale and complexity of the modern world, it is unrealistic to aspire to self-government as the republican tradition conceives it. From Aristotle's polis to Jefferson's agrarian ideal, the civic conception of freedom found its home in small and bounded places, largely self-sufficient, inhabited by people whose conditions of life afforded the leisure, learning, and commonality to deliberate well about public concerns. But we do not live that way today. To the contrary, we live in a highly mobile continental society, teeming with diversity. Moreover, even this vast society is not self-sufficient but is situated in a global economy whose frenzied flow of money and goods, information and images, pays little heed to nations, much less neighborhoods. How, under conditions such as these, could the civic strand of freedom possibly take hold?

In fact, this objection continues, the republican strand of American politics, for all its persistence, has often spoken in a voice tinged with nostalgia. Even as Jefferson exalted the yeoman farmer, America was becoming a manufacturing nation. And so it was with the artisan republicans of Andrew Jackson's day, the apostles of free labor in Abraham Lin-

coln's time, and the shopkeepers and pharmacists Brandeis defended against the curse of bigness. In each of these cases—or so it is argued—republican ideals found their expression at the last moment, too late to offer feasible alternatives, just in time to offer an elegy for a lost cause. If the republican tradition is irredeemably nostalgic, then whatever its capacity to illuminate the defects of liberal politics, it offers little that could lead us to a richer civic life.

The second objection holds that even were it possible to recover republican ideals, to do so would not be desirable; given the difficulty of instilling civic virtue, republican politics always runs the risk of coercion. This peril can be glimpsed in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's account of the formative undertaking necessary to a democratic republic. The task of the republic's founder or great legislator, he writes, is no less than "to change human nature, to transform each individual . . . into a part of a larger whole from which this individual receives, in a sense, his life and his being." The legislator "must deny man his own forces" in order to make him reliant on the community as a whole. The more nearly each person's individual will is "dead and obliterated," the more likely that person is to embrace the general will. "Thus if each citizen is nothing and can do nothing except in concert with all the others . . . one can say that the legislation has achieved the highest possible point of perfection."

The coercive face of soulcraft is by no means unknown among American republicans. For example, Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, wanted "to convert men into republican machines" and to teach each citizen "that he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property." But civic education need not take so harsh a form. In practice, successful republican soulcraft involves a gentler kind of tutelage. For example, the political economy of citizenship that informed nineteenth-century American life sought to cultivate not only commonality but also the independence and judgment to deliberate well about the common good. It worked not by coercion but by a complex mixture of persuasion and habituation—what Alexis de Tocqueville called "the slow and quiet action of society upon itself."

The dispersed, differentiated character of American public life in Tocqueville's day and the indirect modes of character formation this differentiation allowed are what separate Rousseau's republican exertions from the civic practices Tocqueville described. Unable to abide disharmony, Rousseau's republican ideal seeks to collapse the distance between persons so that citizens stand in a kind of speechless transparency, or immediate presence to one another. Where the general will prevails, the citizens "consider themselves to be a single body" and there is no need for political argument. "The first to propose [a new law] merely says what everybody has already felt; and there is no question of intrigues or eloquence" to secure its passage.

It is this assumption, that the common good is unitary and uncontested, not the formative ambition as such, that in-

THE civic strand of Reagan's rhetoric enabled him to succeed, where Democrats failed, in tapping the mood of discontent. But the unfettered capitalism Reagan favored did nothing to repair the moral fabric of families, neighborhoods, and communities and much to undermine them.

clines Rousseau's politics to coercion. It is, moreover, an assumption that republican politics can do without. As America's experience with the political economy of citizenship suggests, the civic conception of freedom does not render disagreement unnecessary. It offers a way of conducting political argument, not transcending it.

Unlike Rousseau's unitary vision, the republican politics Tocqueville described is more clamorous than consensual. It does not despise differentiation. Instead of collapsing the space between persons, it fills this space with public institutions that gather people together in various capacities, that both separate and relate them. These institutions include the townships, schools, religions, and virtue-sustaining occupations that form the "character of mind" and "habits of the heart" a democratic republic requires. Whatever their more particular purposes, these agencies of civic education inculcate the habit of attending to public things. And yet given their multiplicity, they prevent public life from dissolving into an undifferentiated whole.

So the civic strand of freedom is not necessarily coercive. It can sometimes find pluralistic expression. To this extent the liberal objection to republican political theory is misplaced. But the liberal worry does contain an insight that cannot be dismissed: republican politics is risky politics, a politics without guarantees, and the risks it entails inhere in the formative project. To accord the political community a stake in the character of its citizens is to concede the possibility that bad communities may form bad characters. Dispersed power and multiple sites of civic formation may reduce these dangers but cannot remove them.

WHERE LIBERALS FEAR TO TREAD

WHAT to make of this complaint depends on the alternatives. If there were a way to secure freedom without attending to the character of citizens, or to define rights without affirming a conception of the good life, then the liberal objection to the formative project might be decisive. But is there such a way? Liberal political theory claims that there is. The voluntarist conception of freedom promises to lay to rest, once and for all, the risks of republican politics. If liberty can be detached from the exercise of

self-government and conceived instead as the capacity of persons to choose their own ends, then the difficult task of forming civic virtue can finally be dispensed with. Or at least it can be narrowed to the seemingly simpler task of cultivating toleration and respect for others.

In the voluntarist conception of freedom, statecraft no longer needs soulcraft, except in a limited domain. Tying freedom to respect for the rights of freely choosing selves dampens old disputes about how to form the habits of self-rule. It spares politics the ancient quarrels about the nature of the good life. Once freedom is detached from the formative project, "the problem of setting up a state can be solved even by a nation of devils," in Kant's memorable words. "For such a task does not involve the moral improvement of man."

But the liberal attempt to detach freedom from the formative project confronts problems of its own, problems that can be seen in both the theory and the practice of the procedural republic. The philosophical difficulty lies in the liberal conception of citizens as freely choosing, independent selves, unencumbered by moral or civic ties antecedent to choice. This vision cannot account for a wide range of moral and political obligations that we commonly recognize, such as obligations of loyalty or solidarity. By insisting that we are bound only by ends and roles we choose for ourselves, it denies that we can ever be claimed by ends we have not chosen—ends given by nature or God, for example, or by our identities as members of families, peoples, cultures, or traditions.

Some liberals concede that we may be bound by obligations such as these but insist that they apply to private life alone and have no bearing on politics. But this raises a further difficulty. Why insist on separating our identity as citizens from our identity as persons more broadly conceived? Why should political deliberation not reflect our best understanding of the highest human ends? Don't arguments about justice and rights unavoidably draw on particular conceptions of the good life, whether we admit it or not?

The problems in the theory of procedural liberalism show up in the practice it inspires. A politics that brackets morality and religion too completely soon generates its own disenchantment. Where political discourse lacks moral resonance, the yearning for a public life of larger meaning finds undesirable expression. The Christian Coalition and similar groups seek to clothe the naked public square with narrow, intolerant

moralisms. Fundamentalists rush in where liberals fear to tread. The disenchantment also assumes more secular forms. Absent a political agenda that addresses the moral dimension of public questions, attention becomes riveted on the private vices of public officials. Political discourse becomes increasingly preoccupied with the scandalous, the sensational, and the confessional as purveyed by tabloids, talk shows, and eventually the mainstream media as well. It cannot be said that the public philosophy of contemporary liberalism is wholly responsible for these tendencies. But liberalism's vision of political discourse is too spare to contain the moral energies of democratic life. It creates a moral void that opens the way for intolerance and other misguided moralisms.

A political agenda lacking substantive moral discourse is one symptom of the public philosophy of the procedural republic. Another is a loss of mastery. The triumph of the voluntarist conception of freedom has coincided with a growing sense of disempowerment. Despite the expansion of rights in recent decades, Americans find to their frustration that they are losing control of the forces that govern their lives. This has partly to do with the insecurity of jobs in the global economy, but it also reflects the self-image by which we live. The liberal self-image and the actual organization of modern social and economic life are sharply at odds. Even as we think and act as freely choosing, independent selves, we confront a world governed by impersonal structures of power that defy our understanding and control. The voluntarist conception of freedom leaves us ill equipped to contend with this condition. Liberated though we may be from the burden of identities we have not chosen, entitled though we may be to the range of rights assured by the welfare state, we find ourselves overwhelmed as we turn to face the world on our own resources.

GLOBAL POLITICS AND PARTICULAR IDENTITIES

IF the public philosophy of contemporary liberalism fails to address democracy's discontent, the question remains how a renewed attention to republican themes might better equip us to contend with our condition. Is self-government in the republican sense even possible under modern conditions, and if so, what qualities of character would be necessary to sustain it?

A partial, inchoate answer can be glimpsed in the shifting terms of contemporary political argument. Some conservatives, and recently some liberals, have gestured toward a revival of civic virtue, character formation, and moral judgment as considerations in public policy and political discourse. From the 1930s to the 1980s conservatives criticized the welfare state on libertarian grounds. Since the mid-1980s, however, the conservative argument has focused on the moral and civic consequences of federal social policy. Welfare is at odds with freedom, many conservatives now argue, not because it coerces taxpayers but because it breeds dependence

and irresponsibility among recipients and so deprives them of the independence that full citizenship requires.

Liberals came more reluctantly to the revolt against the procedural republic, but they too have begun to articulate civic themes. In November of 1993, speaking in the Memphis church where Martin Luther King Jr. preached the night before his assassination, Bill Clinton ventured onto moral and spiritual terrain that liberals of recent times had sought to avoid. Restoring work to the life of the inner city was essential, he explained, not only for the income it would bring but also for its character-forming effects, for the discipline, structure, and pride that work confers on family life.

But suppose that the civic intimations present in our politics did find fuller voice and succeeded in reorienting the terms of political discourse. What is the prospect that a revitalized politics could actually alleviate the loss of mastery and the erosion of community that lie at the heart of democracy's discontent? Even a politics that engaged rather than avoided substantive moral discourse and managed to revive the formative project would confront a daunting obstacle. This obstacle consists in the formidable scale on which modern economic life is organized and the difficulty of achieving the democratic political authority necessary to govern it.

The difficulty actually involves two related challenges. One is to devise political institutions capable of governing the global economy. The other is to cultivate the civic identities necessary to sustain those institutions, to supply them with the moral authority they require. It is not obvious that both these challenges can be met.

In a world where capital and goods, information and images, pollution and people, flow across national boundaries with unprecedented ease, politics must assume transnational, even global, forms, if only to keep up. Otherwise, economic power will go unchecked by democratically sanctioned political power. Nation-states, traditionally the vehicles of self-government, will find themselves increasingly unable to bring their citizens' judgments to bear on the economic forces that govern their destinies. If the global character of the economy suggests the need for transnational forms of governance, however, it remains to be seen whether such political units can inspire the identification and allegiance—the moral and civic culture—on which democratic authority ultimately depends.

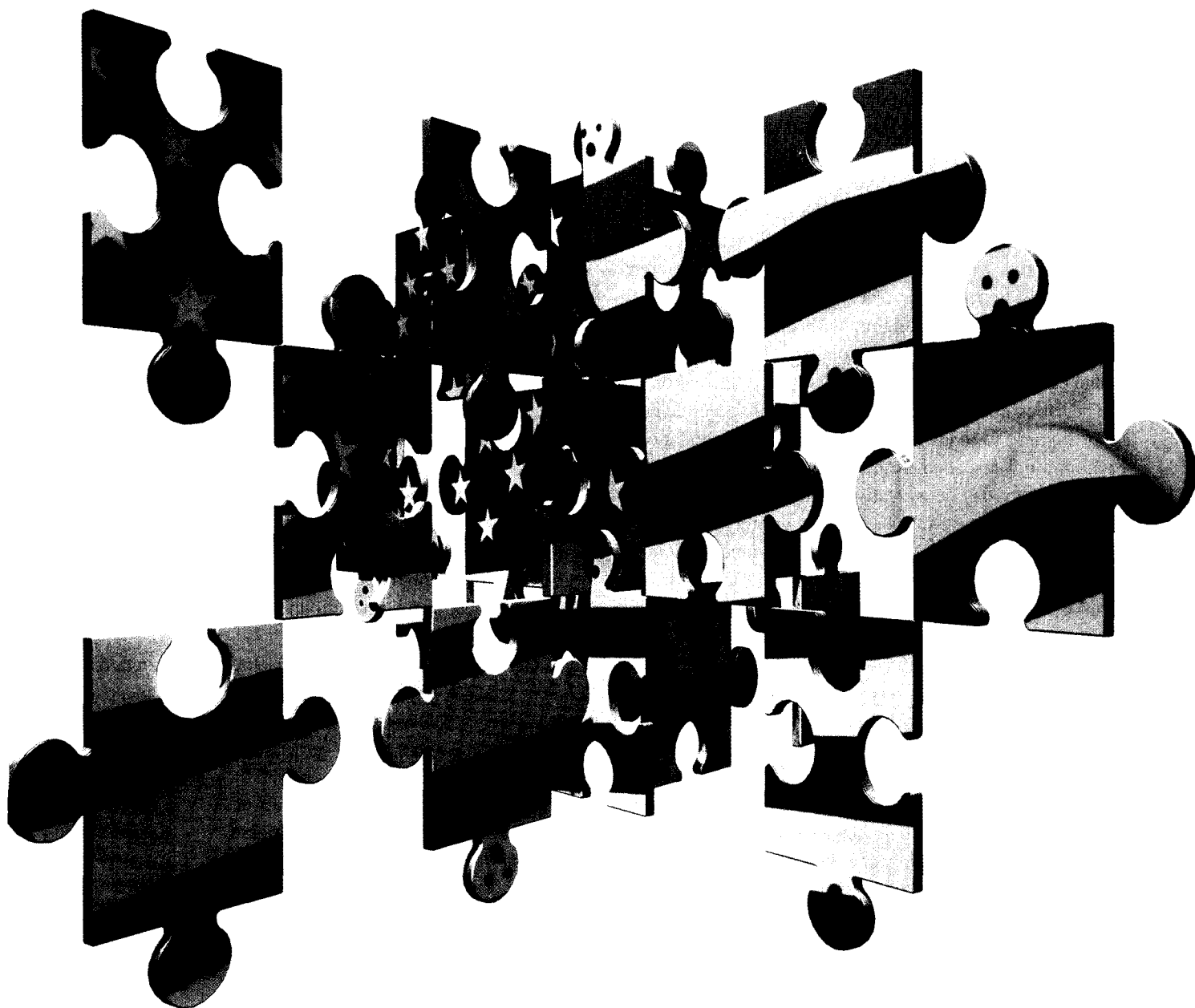
In striking ways, the challenge to self-government in the global economy resembles the predicament American politics faced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Then as now, new forms of commerce and communication spilled across familiar political boundaries and created networks of interdependence among people in distant places. But the new interdependence did not carry with it a new sense of community. Jane Addams's insight, that "the mere mechanical fact of interdependence amounts to nothing," is no less apt today. What railroads, telegraph wires, and national markets were to her time, satellite hookups, CNN, cyberspace, and global markets are to ours—instruments that link people

without necessarily making them neighbors or fellow citizens or participants in a common venture.

Given the similarity between their predicament and ours, it is tempting to think that the logic of the Progressives' solution can be extended to our time. If the way to respond to a national economy was to strengthen the national government and cultivate a sense of national citizenship, perhaps the way to respond to a global economy is to strengthen

global neighborhood based on economic exchange and improved communications into a universal moral community."

The analogy between the globalizing impulse of our time and the nationalizing project of the Progressives' time does hold to this extent: We cannot hope to govern the global economy without transnational political institutions, and we cannot expect to sustain such institutions without cultivating more-expansive civic identities. Human-rights conventions,



global governance and cultivate a corresponding sense of global or cosmopolitan citizenship. Internationally minded reformers have already begun to articulate this impulse. The Commission on Global Governance, a group of twenty-eight public officials from around the world, recently published a report calling for greater authority for international institutions. The commission also called for efforts to inspire "broad acceptance of a global civic ethic," to transform "a

global environmental accords, and world bodies governing trade, finance, and economic development are among the undertakings that will depend for public support on inspiring a greater sense of engagement in a shared global destiny.

But the cosmopolitan vision is wrong to suggest that we can restore self-government simply by pushing sovereignty and citizenship upward. The hope for self-government today lies not in relocating sovereignty but in dispersing it. The

most promising alternative to the sovereign state is not a cosmopolitan community based on the solidarity of humankind but a multiplicity of communities and political bodies—some more extensive than nations and some less—among which sovereignty is diffused. Only a politics that disperses sovereignty both upward and downward can combine the power required to rival global market forces with the differentiation required of a public life that hopes to inspire the allegiance of its citizens.

In some places dispersing sovereignty may entail according greater cultural and political autonomy to subnational communities—such as Catalans and Kurds, Scots and Quebecois—even while strengthening and democratizing the European Union and other transnational structures. Arrangements like these may avoid the strife that arises when state sovereignty is an all-or-nothing affair. In the United States, which never was a nation-state in the European sense, proliferating sites of political engagement may take a different form. America was born of the conviction that sovereignty need not reside in a single place. From the start the Constitution divided power among branches and levels of government. Over time, however, we, too, have pushed sovereignty and citizenship upward, in the direction of the nation.

The nationalizing of American political life occurred largely in response to industrial capitalism. The consolidation of economic power called forth the consolidation of political power. Present-day conservatives who rail against big government often ignore this fact. They wrongly assume that rolling back the power of the national government would liberate individuals to pursue their own ends, instead of leaving them at the mercy of economic forces beyond their control.

Conservative complaints about big government find popular resonance, but not for the reasons conservatives articulate. The American welfare state is politically vulnerable because it does not rest on a sense of national community adequate to its purpose. The nationalizing project that unfolded from the Progressive Era to the New Deal to the Great Society succeeded only in part. It managed to create a strong national government but failed to cultivate a shared national identity. As the welfare state developed, it drew less on an ethic of social solidarity and mutual obligation and more on an ethic of fair procedures and individual rights. But the liberalism of the procedural republic proved an inadequate substitute for the strong sense of citizenship that the welfare state requires.

If the nation cannot summon more than a minimal commonality, it is unlikely that the global community can do better, at least on its own. A more promising basis for a democratic politics that reaches beyond nations is a revitalized civic life nourished in the more particular communities we inhabit. In the age of NAFTA the politics of neighborhood matters more, not less. People will not pledge allegiance to vast and distant entities, whatever their importance, unless those institutions are somehow connected to political arrangements that reflect the identity of the participants.

BEYOND SOVEREIGN STATES AND SOVEREIGN SELVES

THE growing aspiration for the public expression of communal identities reflects a yearning for political arrangements that can situate people in a world increasingly governed by vast and distant forces. For a time the nation-state promised to answer this yearning, to provide the link between identity and self-rule. In theory at least, each state was a more or less self-sufficient political and economic unit that gave expression to the collective identity of a people defined by a common history, language, or tradition. The nation-state laid claim to the allegiance of its citizens on the ground that its exercise of sovereignty expressed their collective identity.

In the contemporary world, however, this claim is losing its force. National sovereignty is eroded from above by the mobility of capital, goods, and information across national boundaries, the integration of world financial markets, and the transnational character of industrial production. And national sovereignty is challenged from below by the resurgent aspirations of subnational groups for autonomy and self-rule. As their effective sovereignty fades, nations gradually lose their hold on the allegiance of their citizens. Beset by the integrating tendencies of the global economy and the fragmenting tendencies of group identities, nation-states are increasingly unable to link identity and self-rule. Even the most powerful states cannot escape the imperatives of the global economy; even the smallest are too heterogeneous to give full expression to the communal identity of any one ethnic or national or religious group without oppressing others who live in their midst.

Since the days of Aristotle's polis, the republican tradition has viewed self-government as an activity rooted in a particular place, carried out by citizens loyal to that place and the way of life it embodies. Self-government today, however, requires a politics that plays itself out in a multiplicity of settings, from neighborhoods to nations to the world as a whole. Such a politics requires citizens who can abide the ambiguity associated with divided sovereignty, who can think and act as multiply situated selves. The civic virtue distinctive to our time is the capacity to negotiate our way among the sometimes overlapping and sometimes conflicting obligations that claim us, and to live with the tension to which multiple loyalties give rise.

The global media and markets that shape our lives beckon us to a world beyond boundaries and belonging. But the civic resources we need to master these forces, or at least to contend with them, are still to be found in the places and stories, memories and meanings, incidents and identities, that situate us in the world and give our lives their moral particularity. The task for politics now is to cultivate these resources, to repair the civic life on which democracy depends. ☘



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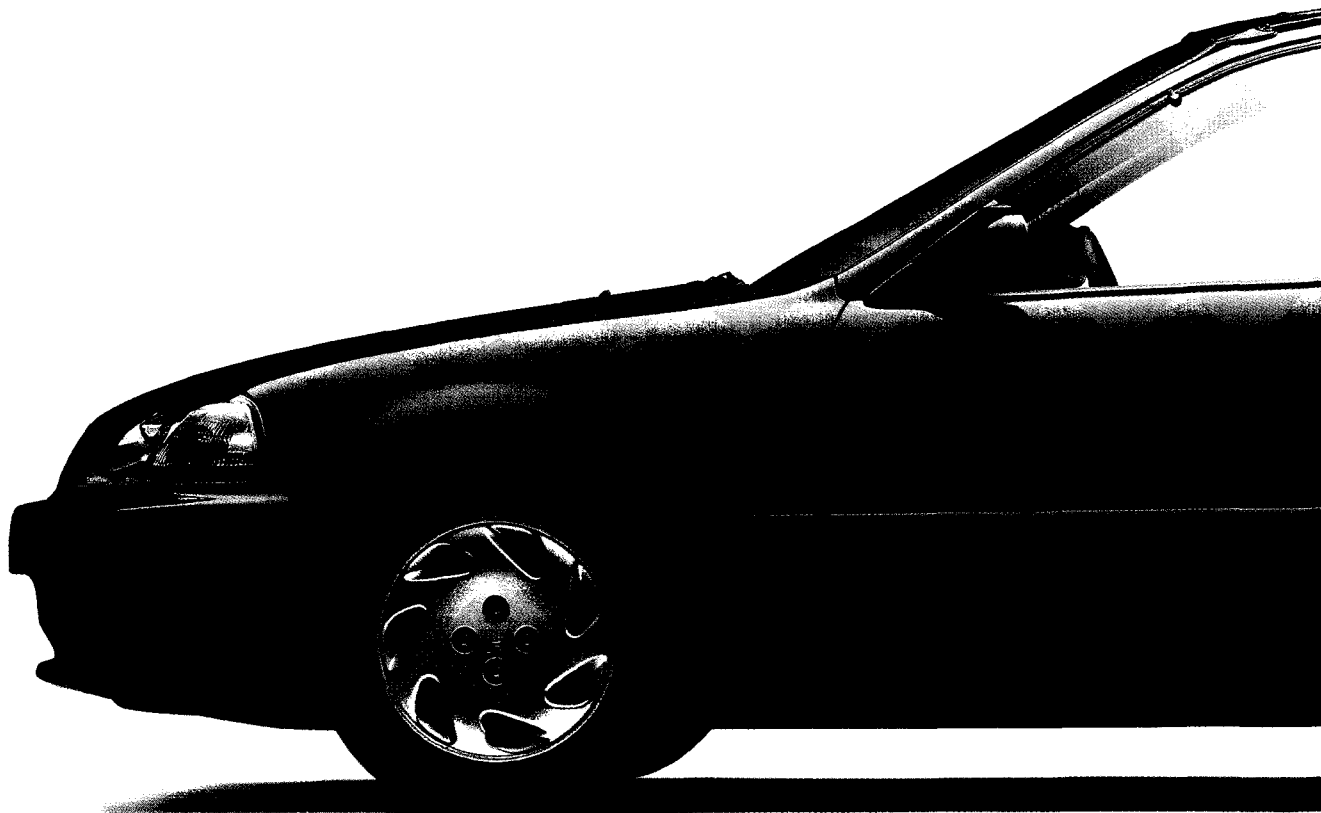
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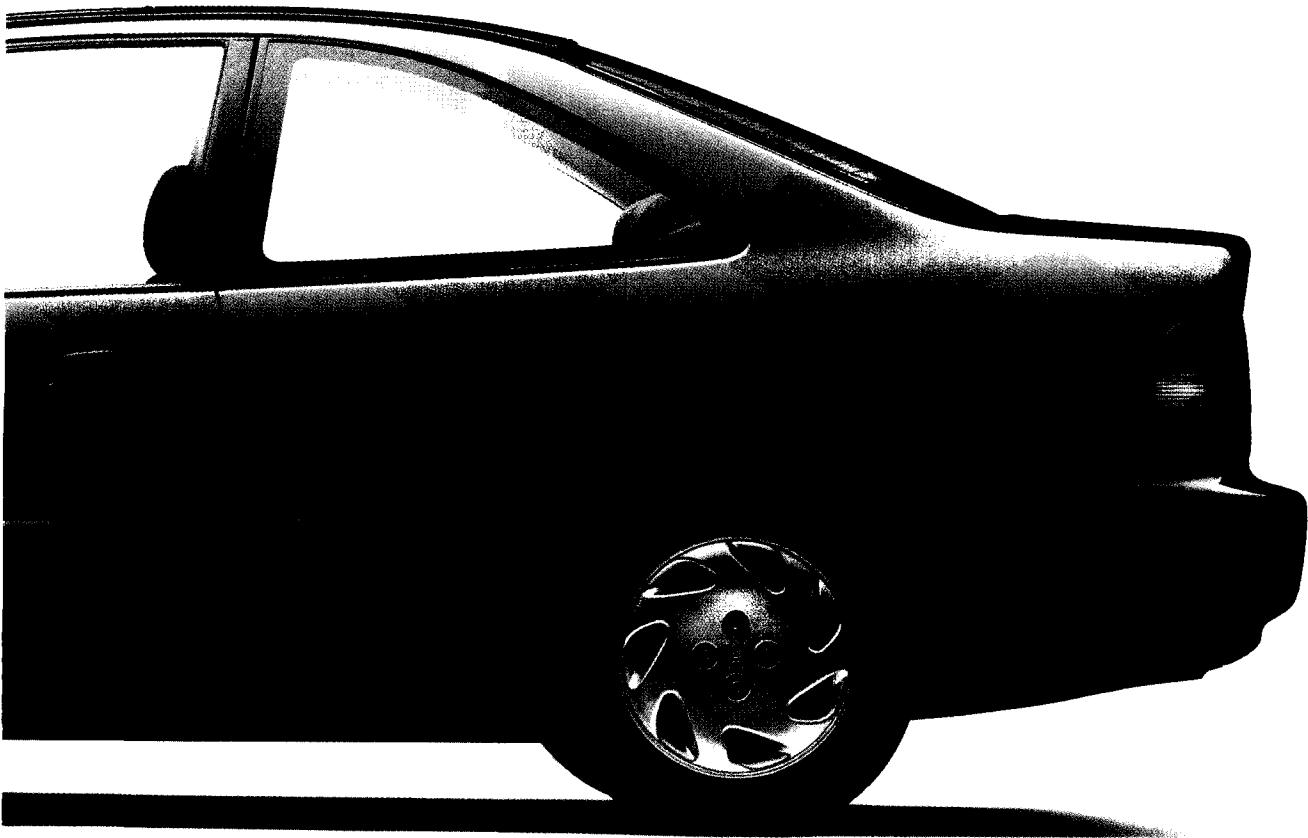
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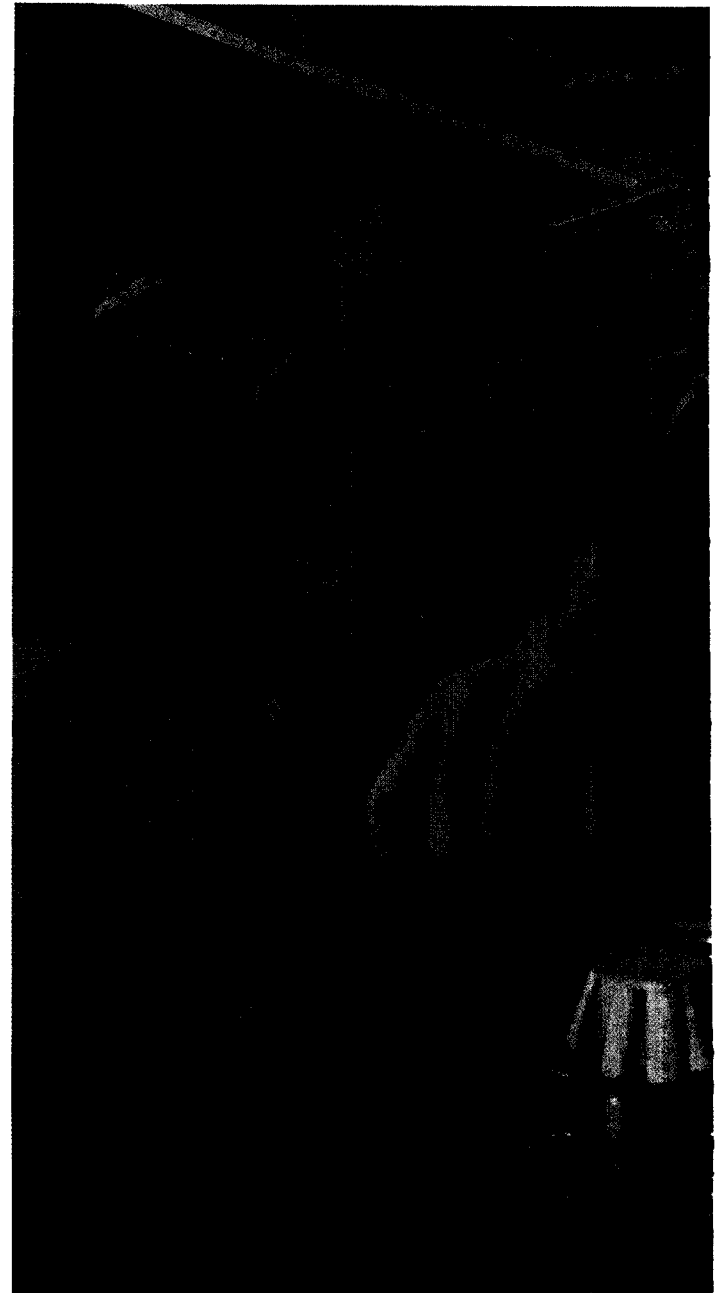
Why I'm Talking

by DALE RAY PHILLIPS

I was eight
that summer, and
had decided to
stop talking.
My reasoning seemed
sound enough:
whatever had
abducted my mother
might steal me
if I let out
too many words

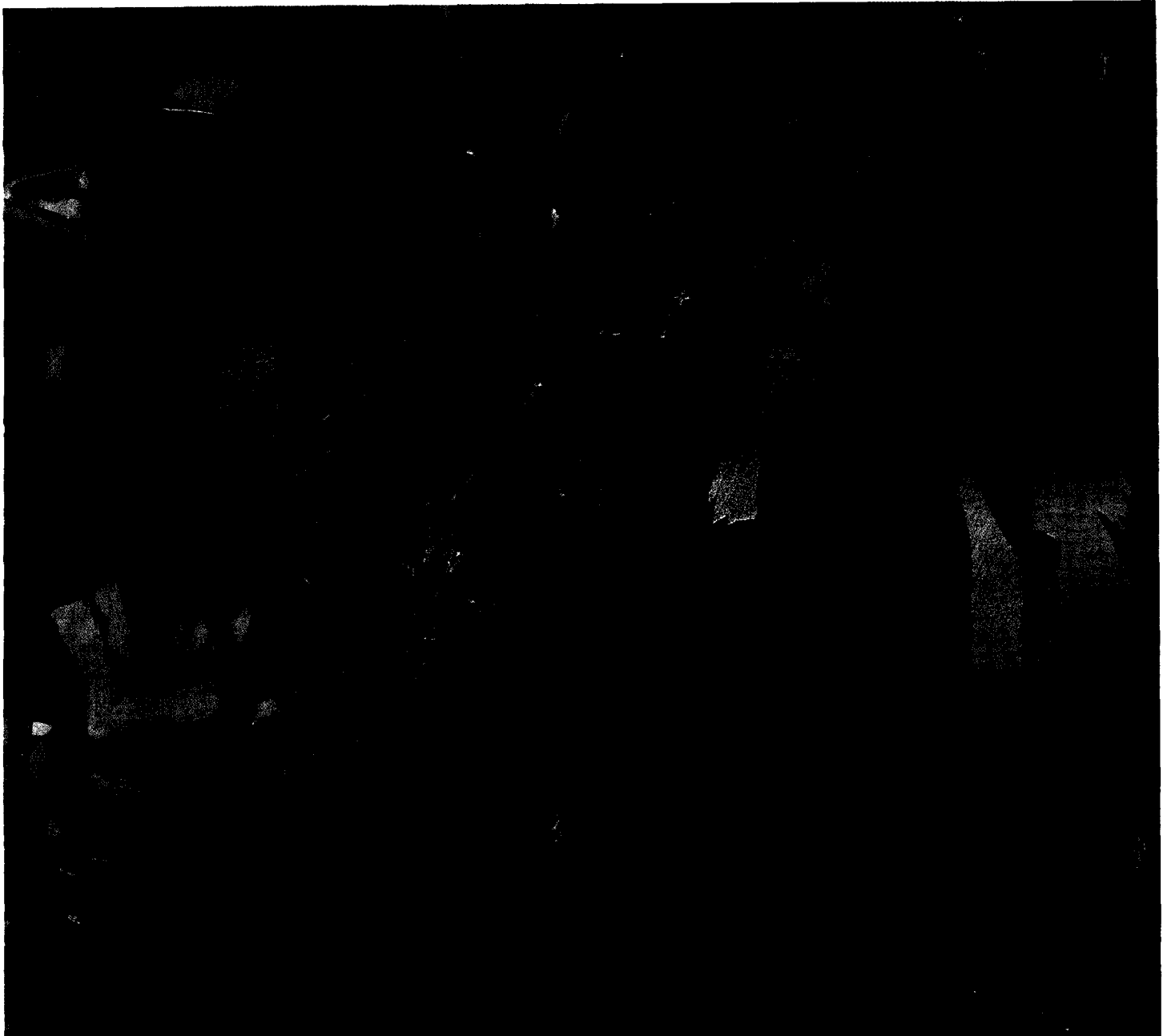
WY grandfather kept his mistress in a silver Airstream above the bend in the river where the dead crossed over. He had finagled Miss Minnie a job as lifetime caretaker of a little patch of no-man's-land and a cemetery just across the Haw River. Whenever a black tenant farmer died, we watched from the trailer's picture window as a slipshod barge fashioned of dye-barrel pontoons and salvaged lumber ferried the coffin and mourners across the river to the grave. On these occasions Miss Minnie usually fried catfish from the deep freezer, which we kept chock-full by trotlining. The passage of a neighbor to the other shore dispirited her, but it made my grandfather hungry.

"There goes another soul to sweet Jesus," Miss Minnie would remark.



"Not to Jesus," my grandfather would say, correcting her. "To a place not listed on any of the maps."

The cemetery was part of a deal concocted by my grandfather. The property had been willed as a Negro cemetery by an eccentric widow whose ancestor had kept slaves and whose land straddled two counties—neither of which wanted the expense of an additional black graveyard. My grandfather, a retired circuit judge and back-room dealmaker, persuaded both counties to lease the dead woman's land to black tenant tobacco farmers and apply the rents to graveyard maintenance. Because neither county acknowledged the site's existence, and because the site was so rural, no bridge had been funded. This was North Carolina in 1959; my family was white; and my grandfather's solution to the



rural Negro burial problem both relieved his party's white constituency and bestowed on him near-hero status among country blacks. It also gave him a place not listed on any of the municipal maps to safekeep Miss Minnie, who was the only black woman with red hair and freckles I had ever seen.

I was eight that summer, and had decided to stop talking. My reasoning seemed sound enough: whatever had abducted my mother might steal me if I let out too many words. *Don't tell*, she had said the afternoon I last saw her. She wore her bridal gown and talked nonstop to her reflection in the mirror. After dusk she instructed me to sit on her lap as she made hand shadows, the shapes in turn as fierce and friendly and unnameable as her craziness. Her heart drummed against my spine, and I understood that we were at a juncture

for which neither of us could find words. My father returned from work and got to us before the oven's gas did. "I hope it's not hereditary," he said as he drove me to my grandfather's "real" house in Graham—a columned stone residence listed in the historical register, where my mother had been born and where her mother, when alive, had entertained governors. I would stay with my grandfather while my father worked as a traveling x-ray-machine salesman and my mother recuperated at an oceanside hospital. "What's the matter—why aren't you talking?" first my father and then my grandfather asked. I didn't answer, because I was still in that wordless place in our lives. My father and grandfather went into the study to discuss strategies. I do not know what went on in that room, but I soon learned I would live with

my grandfather where the dead crossed over while my mother was away.

"Not talking don't make you special," said Sudie, Miss Minnie's illegitimate fifteen-year-old daughter. "Give me an Indian head and get your feel." We slept in the same bed that summer, and for a nickel she'd let me knead and suckle her breasts. We never had anything close to sex; what we did was more like playing doctor, but with a consultation fee. Sudie was my first love and provided my earliest education in metaphysics: she believed, among other things, that a chicken's claw touched to a sleeper's forehead gave you power over that person; that spiders wove into their webs the names of people who would die violently; and that on certain nights—especially the summer solstice and Halloween—you could look into the Haw, and under the mirrored surface the faces of everyone who had ever lived would drift by, caught in the silent place from which the dead watch us.

Sometimes at night, while my grandfather and Miss Minnie slept, Sudie and I sneaked from the trailer and lay on the barge, waiting for Willie Reese. Sudie told stories while an owl called from an empty place out in the night. The river was always the setting of these stories, involving the back seats of battered sedans and subsequent shotgun weddings, snakebites, moonshine, unfaithful lovers and stabbings, ghosts, and lunatic relatives who tried to drown themselves. Sudie allowed me to light a crooked Salem she kept hidden in her underwear. The dirt path leading up to the bluff and trailer shone like snow in the full moon's light, and from this direction Willie Reese would strut, seeming a piece of the night scissored free and set to walking.

"My Sudie baby out here waiting for Willie Reese?" His voice was as slick and twisted as licorice as he stepped on board the barge. When he saw me, his face formed a question and then relaxed. He considered me a conspirator, as most people did; when you don't talk, people assume you won't tell.

"Up by the fork in the road there's a sack of candy for a fellow who knows how to keep his mouth shut." Willie Reese got nervous if I watched him and Sudie make love. I trotted to where the driveway branched off the dirt road, and I found the candy. Then I peed my initials in the dirt. Our front yard was a half acre of tobacco, and I wandered between the rows. From my pocket I took the map my father had given me, with a red circle marking his territory in the mountains, and a blue circle indicating my mother's hospital, at the ocean. I'd try to think of anything but my suspicion that love had gotten us into all this. I stretched myself atop the map to encompass the places my parents were scattered. Then I thought of small miracles: the way peppermint tasted of winter and things lingering; the sound my name made as it came back at me after I had shouted it down a well; the gritty taste of red clay Miss Minnie had secretly made me eat to cure my muteness; the coaxing of a chicken to sleep by forcing its head to the sand and drawing a line

with a stick outward from its beak; and the gradual way the water rose after upstream, unseen thundershowers. When this happened, the river sounded the way the wind does when it weaves a net of itself through the trees. At such times the Haw seemed the oldest of hymns, forcing the measure of its music into us all.



HIS was the summer I learned that guile was not necessarily bad or verbal. Once a week my grandfather and I dressed in our best suits and returned to Graham—where his house sat across from the courthouse. We feigned the look of travelers returning hurriedly to conduct domestic business. My grandfather opened and answered his mail and assured meddlesome neighbors that the specialists in Chapel Hill—where we were supposedly staying—were making headway against my speechlessness. The most doting and double-chinned of the widows, Cleora Cates, actually cried when my grandfather explained that my treatment consisted of a series of painful abdominal shots like the ones victims of rabies endure. Family histories were recounted: somehow our predicament—my grandmother's death two years earlier and my mother's nervousness—reminded these women of similar tribulations that life had visited upon them. A sort of collective speculation on why God permits evil seemed to connect us all. The booty that came from nodding a sad yes to all that my grandfather manufactured was armfuls of black-walnut cakes and chess pies and fresh cobblers. The lesson I learned was twofold and simple: once something is uttered, it takes on a life of its own; and sadness must be fed. On each of these visits I wrote my mother postcards, dictated by my grandfather, about the kindly specialists in Chapel Hill and the good life on Courthouse Square. We posted these dispatches weekly in lieu of phone calls, because my silence hindered her recovery. Deception and protection would be forever linked for me.

"Jesus," my grandfather said as we drove back to our hideaway. I was eating blackberry cobbler straight from the casserole dish with three cupped fingers. "Can you see me marrying one of those old bats? It would be all slippers and Rook games and goddamned church socials. And you—they'd have you taking piano lessons and singing in the Rotary Boys' Club Choir."

Another time he said, "When you sort things out and start talking again, what will you say? That you had a dandy time this summer?" I had. "That unconscionable acts were committed in the trailer?" I had once walked in on him and Miss Minnie, catching them in what I would later learn to call *flagrante delicto*. "Whatever else you say"—he hammered on the wheel as the judge in him talked—"explain that social circumstances prevented an outright and public declaration of my feelings toward Miss Minnie." Like most people in love, my grandfather thought his predicament was beyond explanation.

HENEVER the signs in *Grier's Almanac* were propitious, Miss Minnie administered spells and potions to cure me of my voluntary muteness. I endured necklaces of garlic, an impromptu exorcism in which I stared at a crucifix so long I feared my eyes had permanently crossed, several smelly poultices strapped snugly to my chest like life jackets, and baptisms in everything from mail-order holy water to motor oil. Miss Minnie had once cured a dog of mange by rubbing it with Quaker State, so she tried it on me. Healing me became secondary only to her duties as mistress. My grandfather usually watched us from the hammock with his two-o'clock toddy resting on his generous belly. He alone seemed to sense that my silence was a protective measure against the force that scattered the things I loved.

"The boy is simply making an existential statement," he'd say after his third or fourth bourbon. "His silence is his defense." Then he got that look in his eye of a man on vacation who suddenly remembers the small pleasures of afternoon baths and naps. He announced that the heat and whiskey had given him mild heart palpitations; would Miss Minnie do him the honor of giving him an alcohol chest rub in the bedroom by the window fan? Sudie and I checked the trotlines while they made love. From the johnboat's bow the trailer resembled the balcony my mother had waved from when my father and I had taken her to the hospital, and above that—past the canopy of oaks so old the area's first settlers and Indians had negotiated treaties beneath those limbs at this natural ford in the river—stretched the blue promise of heaven. *Above us all, there is healing*, I'd think.

This belief and the river formed the architecture of my childhood. The Haw in June was as sluggish as a cat in a favorite chair. While Sudie poled, I handlined for small bream beneath weeping willows. We baited our trotline with these fish. Down past the bend in the river where the barge crossed, we set our line, weighted at intervals with bricks. As I walked the line, the catfish came up slowly—white-bellied ghosts whose sudden materialization I felt in throbs before I saw them. In trotlining, as in all fishing, the participant evokes an unspoken order. If each hook is baited properly and set at the right depth, a predictable event—a caught fish—will follow, and a wholeness seemed secured whenever we ate what we caught. Things were too often unpredictable; I understood this at eight, but I couldn't articulate it. My mother's absence was a mystery, as

was the reason that Sudie's breasts soothed me; yet somehow I had traveled to this place not known to cartographers, on a river whose flowing defined its being. While I unhooked the catfish and dispatched them with a jackknife blade to the brain, Sudie explained the way water worked its way down from the sky and through earth and bedrock and the graves of the dead to become a substance solid enough to float the boat where we fished. And she told stories. Many of her tales were repetitive and inconsistent; in one version her first lover might be Willie Reese, while in another it was the retarded Stuttgart boy. How can something be two things? I'd wonder.

At the crossroads store—where we went almost every evening with my grandfather after trotlining—my dumbness became a source of betting and speculation. Porter Satterfield laid ten dollars on a hunch that nights, in my sleep, I chattered away with all my held-in words wanting out. Lincoln Coble theorized that my condition was the result of a curse that a man condemned to hang had levied against my grandfather, the sentencing judge. My grandfather reminded him that no one had been hanged in our two counties for more than 200 years, and that until recently the boys in Raleigh had done the executing by electric chair. This fact—death by electricity—set off stories of downed power lines and ball light-



ning, which had once rolled through Stan Snow's shotgun hallway. Specific dates of catastrophic storms would be argued not in calendar terms such as July 24, 1955, but in terms of events, such as three weeks after the Waller boy died of swine flu. Sitting there and listening, I was amazed that my misfortune was a part of their own. We were a hard people, who counted time by tragedies and who took a storyteller's pleasure in reshaping our sadness.



THE only time my father visited, he brought a nurse named Darlene. She French-inhaled her cigarette and tugged down the hem of her uniform, which snapped as he guided her from his Buick to the cinder-block steps where I sat halfway through the crew cut Miss Minnie was inflicting. When he opened his arms to me, I pressed my face to his chest, finding his sweat-and-starched-shirt smell mixed with perfume. My father's hand admired the bristled portion of my head and gauged the inches I had grown. When he pinched the muscle I made, he whistled admiringly. Had he brought this woman to cure me?

"Cat still got your tongue?" he asked.

"Look at what the dogs dragged in." My grandfather, dripping wet and in his boxers, struggled with the last tricky steps of the railroad-tie path that led up from the river, where he took his daily bath on sunny days though we had a tub. He tipped back Miss Minnie's sunbonnet, which protected his bald head, and squinted with weak eyes at our strange little group. His long walking stick, fashioned of a sapling once twisted by kudzu, made him resemble a shepherd.

"Confound it, Minnie, don't just stand there—get me my glasses," he said to Darlene. Minnie left us standing in the awkwardness of the moment and returned with his spectacles and his favorite bathrobe, embroidered with peacocks. The tenuous moment was lengthened as he put on his glasses and evaluated what he saw. Once, my mother had stood before a mirror and taken our picture, and the way my grandfather surveyed us reminded me of the way my own eyes had doubted what they saw.

"Whoa, now. What's this?" my grandfather asked.

"Darlene here works third shift at a hospital in Asheville," my father explained. "She needed a lift to the beach, and as I was headed that way, because the doctors said a four-day outing and a second honeymoon with my wife was in order, I offered Darlene my services."

"Your services," my grandfather said. "I bet you offered her your services."

"You're a fine one to judge." My father pointed at Sudie, walking up from the river wearing a necklace of catfish. The tension vanished when my grandfather remarked what an odd lot we all were: a girl wearing fish, a boy half-haired and half-shorn, a man with a nurse in tow, and himself in wet boxers and a bathrobe—all as stupid as stones to be standing like this in the July sun. Sudie hung the fish on the skinning spike and came over to hug my grandfather. He laughed at her with the same laugh he had for me whenever I amused him, and I understood that I had known she was his daughter for a while now—just as my parents' late-night arguments had announced that women like Darlene existed in the world where my father traveled. *It's like a charm bracelet*, Sudie had said the first time she showed me how to string and wear the fish so that the dorsal fins would not prick and infect me with venom. *It keeps the river from pulling you into its world*. The fishy odor of daily trotlining

never quite left our skins, and in bed at night I breathed its comforting secrets with my nose flattened against the brown warmth of Sudie's breasts the way I had once pressed my face to a winter windowpane to witness my breath made visible as it dissipated. This was my first concept of the force that took things away. Sudie claimed that a breath was the same stuff as clouds—water caught between heaven and earth.

"I'm as dry as a desert," my father said. We moved to the picnic table, stationed in the ragged shade of an ancient sycamore whose roots had buckled our attempts at a brick patio. The still air hummed with cicadas as we shooed butterflies from our faces. Miss Minnie finished shearing me while Sudie was sent inside to punch out crustless chicken-salad sandwiches with a jelly jar. The company jar of white liquor made by the Kenny boys was stood on the table. Miss Minnie and Darlene laced theirs with lemonade, while my father and grandfather bumped theirs back medicinally. When Sudie whined that she never got to taste the stuff, I received a dollop in my Nehi soda too. If I was my mother's son, the joke went, *that* would get me to jabbering. I sat on my father's knee as the two men talked of points of mutual interest: when my mother's recovery could be expected (by the end of August, the doctors had assured my father); whether I would travel to the beach this weekend to visit her (no—my mother was adamant that I not see her in a hospital); whether Darlene's presence meant that my father was pulling out on his family ("Don't be absurd," he said). Then the two men began planning a family vacation on Hatteras Island as soon as my mother recuperated. It was as if two worlds existed—an old one where your origins lay, which you hid, and a new one over which you speculated hopefully.

Miss Minnie and Darlene helped themselves to more liquor and ignored the other lives my father and grandfather were discussing. They talked of hard times: before my grandfather, Miss Minnie had been kept by a doctor who beat her and insisted that she dress like an Indian princess. Darlene matched Minnie's story with the insight that certain men liked nurse's uniforms. Then she confided that she was running from an ex-husband whose temper had landed her in the hospital more than once. The mention of hospitals made me think of my mother and of a happy time while vacationing at the ocean, before her full-blown nervousness. My father had heaved out the big rod for drum, but the surf had washed the heavy line shoreward. I had just learned to swim, and when a length of line drifted by, I dove under and tugged like a great fish. This was my first adult-sized deception. I surfaced as far from the line as my breath would allow, and saw my father jerking the rod as he tried to set the hook. My mother laughed and pointed at my father with her drink as she signaled with a finger over her lips that she was in on the shenanigans. The surf had worn off the unattended bait, but my father showed us the bare hook as proof that a monstrous drum had stolen his cut mullet. That night my father insisted



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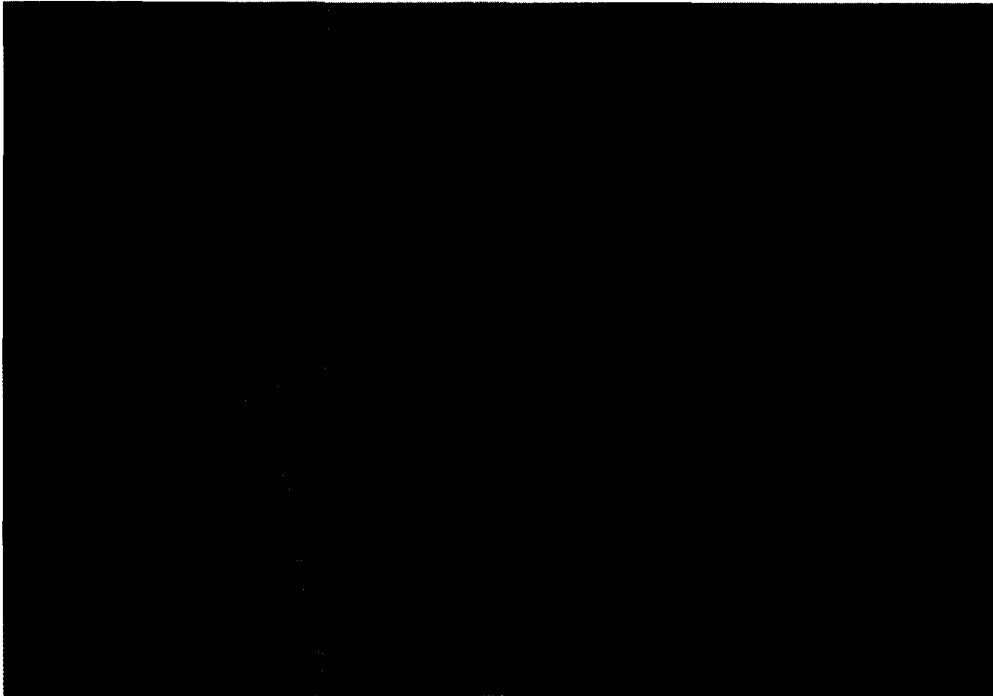
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that we feast on steaks *and* shrimp at a restaurant where he told the waitress he had wrestled with a man-eating shark. Then a couple three tables over speculated that the fish was an amberjack—they had seen them schooling in the surf that very morning. Grave discussions followed on the nature of the beast my father had grappled with. Even the busboy offered his opinion. When we left, patrons waved and wished us luck. That night there had seemed no more secure a confederacy than the spoken and silent portions of our



love. This woman, Darlene, threatened to lure my father away.

I waited until my father and grandfather had gone to check the Buick's oil and Miss Minnie was inside seasoning the pintos with Sudie before I slipped Darlene the picture of my mother I had been harboring. Then I ran to the river and shed my clothes for a swim. I practiced all the strokes I knew—jellyfish, sidestroke, crawl, under water, and backstroke. The joke in the family was that I was half fish. When I found a rock big enough and jumped off the barge with it, its weight carried me past where the light quit, to a place I feared was bottomless. All the way down, the words and air escaped in bubbles until my feet found the riverbed. With the stone on my chest, I lay back and imitated someone dead. While my ears popped, I felt with a free hand for a souvenir pebble from this place where everything uttered sounded like Beelzebub. I talked to my mother, saying "I have gone to the bottom of the world and brought this back for you." This childish fantasy continued as long as my lungs lasted. I invented yarns of successfully skirted tragedies and open-armed homecomings. The force that had taken my mother, I was convinced, could be cajoled into giving her back.

Though I had expected to find my father, angry that I had

shown his traveling companion the picture, Darlene stood on the barge when I surfaced. She seemed relieved that I hadn't drowned.

"Your mother?" She tucked the picture into the pocket of my pants, which were lying neatly folded on the decking. She claimed that the liquor and sun made her feel like dancing, so she pulled off her shoes without untying them and held an imaginary partner at arm's length as she waltzed. The loneliness of talking under water and of slow dancing

alone struck me. For some reason I wanted this woman to see me naked. I pulled myself onto the barge, and she wrapped me in the towel I kept on the railing. I dressed with my front to her and stood for her approval.

"I didn't want to meet you," she said. "Men get a strange pleasure from such things. Once, I dated a man who made me eat every Friday night in the same restaurant where he and his wife were having supper. I swear, it's like they say—love me for the lies I tell. But you . . ." She smiled. "You're a little man who doesn't talk. Thanks for showing me your mother's picture."

I imagined Darlene and my father speeding toward the

ocean with the wind from the open windows parting their hair in odd places. Would they honk at passing cars, or stop for beer and barbecue, as we did when en route to the ocean?

"Don't worry," Darlene added as an afterthought. "I don't steal men. I just let them be boys for a while until they're ready to be men again." When she stirred her drink with her finger, the way my mother did, I began blubbering.

"There, now," Darlene said. "There, now." She pulled me close enough to smell my father's Old Spice on her uniform, and I buried my head where my father's had been. Here was a disconsolate smell I hoped never to inherit.



THREE days later my mother escaped from her second honeymoon with my father, and on the summer solstice she unearthed our whereabouts. Their reconciliation had ended when my father walked from the rented cottage to the pier for cigarettes and returned to find my mother and the car gone. I was alone in the trailer when he called at midnight. My grandfather and Miss Minnie had gone on a moonlight stroll to ease the numbness in his left side, which he attributed to bursitis and inactivity. Sudie had sneaked to the tobacco barn, where she had been spending much time

lately, making me nod yes, I would stay in bed. She promised we would hunt ghosts later that night, when everyone was asleep.

"Who am I talking to? Do I have the right number?" my father kept asking. Then he understood. "Bump once on the receiver if it's you." I did. "Is everyone gone?" I bumped once for yes. "Damn." Then he explained that he was hurrying toward Graham, where my mother's good-bye note indicated she was headed. He had rented a car and would intercept her there. He said my grandfather and I should get back to Courthouse Square and normal living that very night. "Get there before she does, and make the house look lived in." She had an hour's jump on him, so he would have to rush. Things needed to seem normal when she got there—did I understand that? I did. More than anything, I was to quit this no-talking nonsense and explain to my grandfather the urgency of the situation. Then my father tried to coerce me into speaking. When he asked if I wanted my mother to be upset, I tapped twice to show that I didn't. "She will if she finds out about all this. Say something," he said. I answered by disconnecting the phone cord from the wall. This was in the time of party lines, and I imagined my father's panic when he called again and an angry neighbor finally answered our ring and reminded him how late it was.

 LATER, in bed, after everyone else had fallen asleep, Sudie explained that this was the night the dead ranged like cats searching for lost lives. With money in a jar you could catch a spirit, because spirits put coins on their eyes to pay for safe passage between worlds. This seemed as logical to me as the Resurrection, or the common belief that on each anniversary of the instant of Christ's birth, barnyard animals briefly possessed the power of speech. We would catch ourselves a ghost and bribe it into answering questions. She claimed that this enterprise was expensive: my life's savings—a Mason jar heavy with silver hoarded from birthdays, allowances, and odd jobs—might be required. I had been saving the money to buy a brother who would talk for me. That money was *meant* to be stolen.

"You get a free feel tonight," Sudie said. I had placed the customary nickel in her palm. She had been secretive lately, hiding tins of Spam and inventorying her wardrobe. For the past two weeks she had refused to allow me to visit the barge with her, and when she returned, with first light, she muffled her crying with a pillow.

To catch and question a ghost, you need a store of money, a bend in the river that ghosts travel, a guide familiar with their habits, and a belief that the language they have mastered is kin to your own. *When you die*, I had told my mother that day I sat in her lap by the open oven, *I want you to remember me*. I did not understand that I was breathing the same gas.

Down on the barge I dangled my legs in the water while

Sudie took the johnboat and the jar of silver across the Haw. Distant heat lightning illuminated the shoreline without a sound. The glow from the lantern bobbed up and down as she poled. A mist so thick I could swirl handfuls of it rose from the river, full of mint and the promising odor of bream. When Sudie's lantern disappeared behind the headstones in the cemetery, I lay back on the deck and practiced masturbating—something I had seen the Banther boys do over girlie pictures in their cardboard-and-canvas clubhouse. I took comfort in the newfound feel of my stiffness and in the patterns cast on the treetops by headlights on the highway past the tobacco field. *Hell's bells, hell's bells, hell's bells*, I thought, for that was what the Banther boys had said. I knew my earnest manipulation would lead me to a feeling of a particular sort, but it was still beyond me at eight. Tired of this exploration, I zippered myself and searched the river for some sign of ghostly passages.

"I know where a bag of peppermints can be found by a fellow who can keep his mouth shut." When Willie Reese stepped onto the barge, he laughed at how thoroughly he had scared me. He sported a traveling suit with a feathered hat and a wicker suitcase bound with a strap. He glanced over his shoulder nervously, as if being followed. I shook my head no when he asked if I had seen any ghosts. He claimed that as a professional spirit chaser, he could get positive results. He would ferry the barge over to Sudie, bait a jar with snake oil, stopper it when a ghost went inside for a taste, and bring back the jar for me to keep. I would be the only person in Alamance County with a soul in a jar. Like a regular Aladdin's lamp, he claimed, this soul would grant me three wishes.

"You realize you'll have to start talking to make those wishes." Willie Reese had unhitched the barge and taken off for Sudie and what I now realize was the rest of their life together. They would float downriver to the first town with a bus station and vanish from our lives. They eloped with my hoarded innocence into whatever happiness they would own, and I have been following them ever since.

 Y grandfather was awake and drinking when I tried to sneak back inside. He held up each glassful to the globed ceiling light for inspection before swallowing. "Sudie and that Reese boy are lucky," he said, and I understood that he had allowed her to elope. "We're caught, thanks to your phone trick." The phone had been reattached and moved beside the chair that Miss Minnie kept stationed for my grandfather to place and accept calls. I had forgotten that Minnie always checked for a dial tone before going to bed, in case an emergency occurred. My grandfather explained that my father had caught up with my mother in Graham. "When she suspected where we were, it took all he could do to persuade her not to notify the police and charge me with kidnapping. When I talked to her, she was threaten-



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ing to have *me* institutionalized for bringing you here. I couldn't see the sense in pretending anymore that this place doesn't exist, so she's on her way out." My clothes were packed in boxes stacked head high by the door. His suitcases were beside them, with shirttails sticking out. Broken figurines covered the coffee table, and I realized that the car was gone, along with Miss Minnie. Whoever had done this had left in an angry exodus.

"Minnie finally understood that she shouldn't be here when your mother and father arrive," he said when I picked up a glass unicorn. "I've got friends in Danville who'll look after her until this blows over." He rubbed his sternum. "I've also got one hell of a case of heartburn and one hell of an angry and crazy daughter headed my way. I just thought some wild time on the river would get you out of this speak-no-evil mood. You see, your mother knew all about Miss Minnie and this place—even *her* mother did. They just never confronted me with its existence. It's you who didn't know about it. My heart—" he said, and I expected the story of the time it had done leapfrogs inside his chest when he had first seen Minnie. Instead he clawed at his T-shirt and toppled backward so hard that when the straight-backed chair hit the linoleum, his head bounced twice. The swiftness of a heart attack amazed me. His feet pedaled in the air for a bicycle that wasn't there. As the last convulsions struck, he bit off a portion of his tongue. His eyes became as wide as things held under a magnifying glass, and I searched for my image in them as they clouded. Then I shut my grandfather's eyes, because I didn't want to see what they saw.

What do you do with your forefather's tongue? I put that tip of tongue to my lips, stood in front of the living-room mirror, and made it waggle. When pulled away, it left a little moustache of blood. Here was a thing that had lived and loved and pronounced judgments—and it was mine. Then I weighted it with rocks fetched from my river-bottoming and bound the whole affair with cheesecloth meant to wrap fish heads and seasonings for catfish stew. I hurried to the Haw and heaved in this strange offering, because I feared becoming fluent in the language it now spoke.

Y father and mother caught me in the bathroom, naked, trying to wash what I knew from my body. She started screaming when she walked into the trailer and saw her father's corpse, and ran from room to room as she called my name. "Thank God," she said when she found me in the tub. She moaned my grandfather's name and sat on the toilet with her head between her legs while my father fed her pills and whiskey at intervals. Soon she retreated to that sleepy, protected place where he kept her so he wouldn't lose her. He said he had checked the pulse, and now he must call the coroner. He left the bathroom with strict instructions to stay put and be safe. My mother stroked my hair without

remarking that she had never seen me with a crew cut. She said therapy made remembering things difficult. "Another person was in me," she claimed, "but she left." She dreamily explained that she had always wanted to visit this place but she never had, and she was tired of it now—it was much shabbier than she had expected. As she talked, she seemed the ghost of my childhood unfettering itself.

The truth of that summer would get absorbed into the story that we would live. When we left the trailer, we would pretend that summer didn't exist. *If you tell*, my father had warned before I disconnected him, *you are a part of all this*. He came in now with more bourbon and shut the door with his back against it like a sentry. After another glass my mother began insisting that the doctors had cured her, and that the best thing to do was to put all this behind us and use the inheritance money to build in a new subdivision being planned along the upper reaches of the Haw. My father seconded the opinion and voiced certain complaints against a man as supposedly honorable as a judge who carted a *child* along on jaunts to a bimbo. He looked hard at me and swore he had no idea we were holed up here. I understood that we would blame all this on my grandfather.

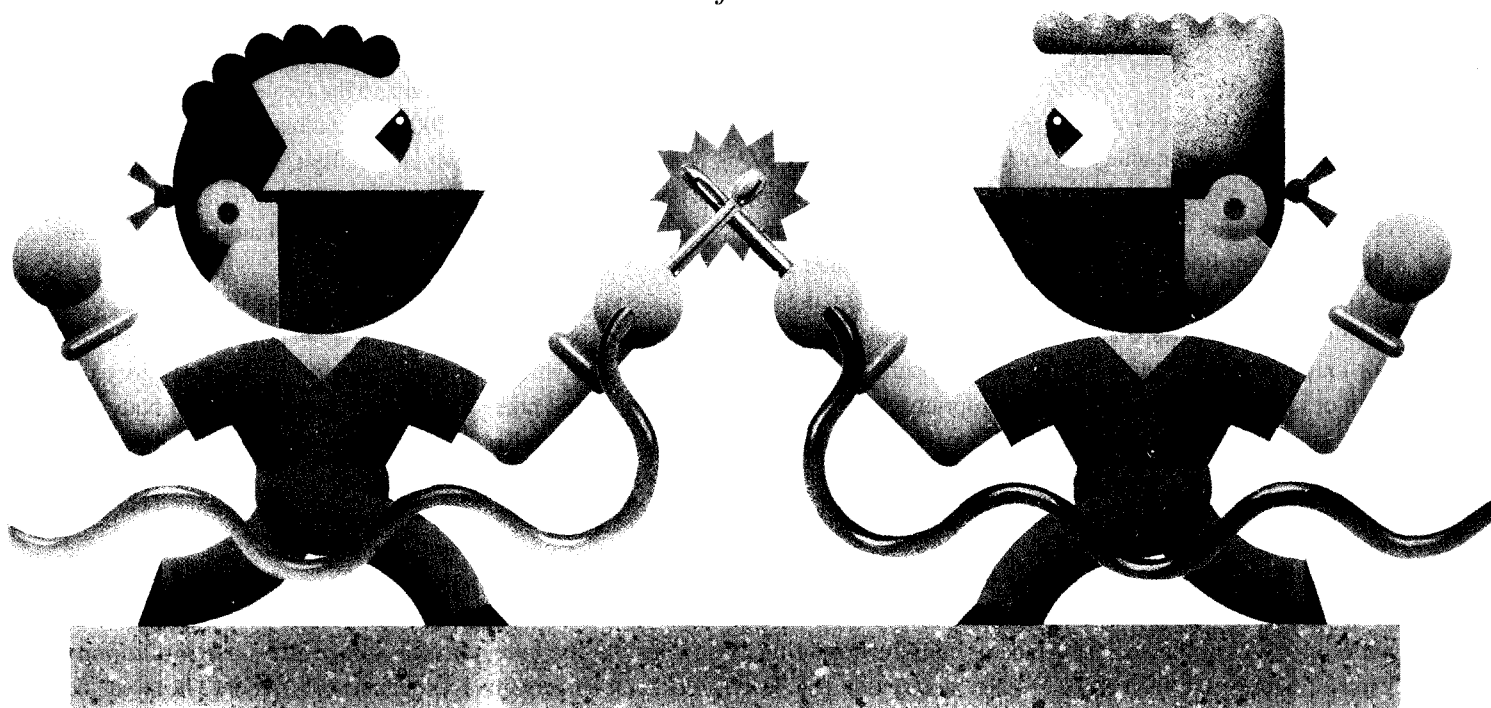
My parents talked excitedly of the future—the business of the living. I listened—the business of children who one day wish to tell. As my father talked of new beginnings, his voice carried the conviction that my mother should be kept safe from the world of Darlenes, where men died in trailers. He was full of the contagious hopefulness people adopt when disaster forces them to start over. The ways we all learned to hurt one another in later years were distant odds we were betting we could beat. I sat, unashamed of my nakedness, in that tub, listening to the new world my parents promised as I bothered the tan marks on my ankles which a summer's worth of sun had left above my shod feet. Then I pulled the plug and lowered my finger into the empty space created by water funneling out the drain. If Sudie was right, this water would enter and exit granite and get caught up as air and the green urge of spring buds. It would christen babies and make hoses hiss and fill space enough for couples on ocean liners to travel. Some of this water was already conspiring to become the dark color of the bend in the river where the dead crossed over. Just as water renamed itself as it entered all things, we would redefine ourselves like a twice-told tale. In that trailer by the river we were that close to where one thing becomes another—which is what the dead see.

"What happened, what happened?" my mother asked. I understood that although this periodic leave-taking had already become a part of our lives, we had somehow become a family, caught in the awkwardness of shaping our first reunion as we reinvented the story of the rest of our lives together. Some chimeras would have to be constructed to keep this good feeling alive, and so I answered her with this voice, which love had taught to deceive. ☼

Adventures in Liposuction

by JUDITH GINGOLD

*A bitter controversy over a surgical technique reveals much about
cosmetic surgery, a strikingly unregulated
branch of medicine*



BACKSTAGE at the twenty-sixth annual meeting of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, held in Boston in April of 1993, two Los Angeles plastic surgeons—Steven M. Hoefflin, who is perhaps best known as Michael Jackson's plastic surgeon, and Wallace A. Goodstein, who had once worked in Hoefflin's office as the "below-the-neck man"—had a vehement altercation, which was recorded by *The Boston Globe*:

"See that face, see that face," Goodstein barked, as he tilted back the head of a woman with a nearly unlined countenance. "I did that face, and she's forty-one."

"Wally, Wally, you've got to look at the safety of this," Hoefflin snapped. "This is a very aggressive procedure."

"Oh, stop it," Goodstein responded. "Ever since I took it above the neck, your twenty-five-thousand-dollar face-lift [business] has been damaged. My way is safe and you know it."

The two men were arguing over an idea that has now obsessed Goodstein for nearly five years. The tenacity of this obsession once made him worry that he was a madman; later it filled him with a sense of purpose and inspired a fascination with genius—including the possibility of his own. At first Goodstein merely bored everybody he knew with his idea, but then, as he lost any trace of self-doubt and adopted the conversational style of a jackhammer, he began to irritate and frighten people. He has estranged his wife (he is now separated), alienated his identical twin and most of his friends, and antagonized many members of his profession—particularly Hoefflin.

Goodstein's obsession is a technique for excising fat—a technique that he believes is safer, cheaper, and far more effective than other forms of liposuction, which is among the most frequently performed cosmetic procedures in the country. His patented process is a variant of liposuction per-

formed with an instrument of his design. It is generally referred to as SDL, for "subdermal liposculpture."

At the annual meeting Goodstein presented his technique by showing a twenty-two-minute videotape that provoked the most hostile response anyone could remember. All the comments from the floor were negative, although the hostility was not based only on misgivings about the safety of SDL. Many doctors were highly critical of the video itself, which they saw as a sales tool rather than a scientific presentation. The audience, 750 plastic surgeons specializing in cosmetic (as opposed to reconstructive) surgery, felt talked down to—"treated as if we were patients rather than experienced surgeons," as one put it. They derided the video's slick announcer and showy graphics, and its absence of substantive scientific evidence. The video did not address the questions of how many surgeries Goodstein had performed, what the range of his results was, and, most important, what the complications were.

Hoefflin asked about complications after the video was over, and Goodstein managed to offend everyone further by claiming that a number of his SDL patients had been very challenging redos of Hoefflin's own work, following complications from liposuction. At this, one observer later told me, Hoefflin was up like a shot, presumably to deny the allegation, but there were already lines at the microphones. For many in the audience, the issue was apparently not the truth or falsity of the claim but its impropriety. As one of the many surgeons who sprang to Hoefflin's defense put it, "It is unconscionable to mention another doctor's complications."

Goodstein, who considers himself primarily a reconstructive surgeon, has never joined the Aesthetic Society, and he did not endear himself to his hosts by emphasizing his disdain for conventional liposuction, a procedure that is the bread and butter of many in the society. Since its introduction in the United States, more than a decade ago, liposuction has become big business. In 1994 plastic surgeons took in at least \$83 million from the procedure—a figure that does not include the earnings of physicians in other specialties who also do liposuction, despite objections from plastic surgeons that only they are qualified. In this country all that is required to perform any outpatient surgical procedure is a license to practice medicine. One staff member of a congressional subcommittee that conducted hearings in 1989 on the safety of cosmetic surgery said at that time, "It is perfectly legal for a dermatologist to do brain surgery in his garage if he can find a patient willing to get on the table and pay for it."

Liposuction is not brain surgery, nor is it a cure for obesity. It was developed to remove from the thighs, buttocks, and trunk localized deposits of fat that resist diet and exercise—such quaintly named software as saddlebags, spare tires, and love handles. Refined techniques now permit liposuction on ankles, calves, faces, and throats. The basic procedure is fairly simple: a metal tube, or cannula, with a blunt end is inserted through a small incision, usually into the deep fat,

which is looser and easier to remove than the fat just beneath the dermis; the other end of the cannula is attached with flexible tubing to a suction machine that aspirates the fat into containers, which are disposed of as medical waste. Not an elegant operation, but one that surgeons say is safe and effective and has a high rate of patient satisfaction.

Goodstein's procedure involves first cutting the fat rather than only sucking it out. He, too, uses a blunt-tipped cannula, but he has added an aperture with a sharp edge, recessed to protect the skin, near the front of the tube. On the forward stroke the sharpened edge cuts the fat and directs it into the tube. Minimal suction, in contrast to the stronger vacuum used in conventional liposuction, then draws the fat from the cannula. Goodstein rejoices in the elegant, low-tech simplicity of his instrument, which he describes as "a Hegelian synthesis" and refers to as "the Veg-o-Matic of plastic surgery." He claims it does a more accurate job than suction alone, causing less blood loss and trauma to the tissues. His patented instrument costs around \$200—a great bargain compared with liposuction machines, which usually cost \$2,000 or \$3,000. The prototype was a cannula he found in Hoefflin's closet and modified in his own garage with a chain-saw sharpener.

COSMETIC surgery is a tool of transformation somewhere between skin care and organ replacement—an odd ontological hybrid in the increasingly crowded category between real and fake, on the blurry border between body and mind. Often dismissed as trivial, it is a twentieth-century version of the universal, frequently ritualistic practice of altering the body in the name of beauty. Like all surgery, it is a combination of applied science, business, and art. But unlike the removal of gall bladders and coronary blockages, cosmetic procedures are supposed to make us happy, not well.

Despite the cutesy names—face-lift, nose job, tummy tuck—the surgery involves genuine risk. Yet once licensed, the surgeons who do it can be subject to less regulation than tattoo artists. Because most cosmetic surgery is elective, it is rarely covered by insurance, and because it is usually performed in small private facilities rather than in hospitals, it is perhaps the last bastion of the autonomous medical entrepreneur who is privately paid and subject mainly to the threat of malpractice, the scrutiny of peers, and the vagaries of the marketplace.

"There's a lot of resentment in the medical profession," Jordan Goodstein, Wallace's twin and a general and oncological surgeon, once explained to me. "A lot of doctors have trouble with the concept that nonessential luxury items are compensated more highly than things that people need. If something is essential to the well-being of the community, you can't make too much money doing it, because the government will step in and regulate it. On the other hand, if you're doing cosmetic surgery, you can charge whatever the market will bear, and there's a little resentment of that. You see, plastic surgeons begin in the same medical system and their education is subsidized, they go through years of train-

ing to take care of sick people, and then the great majority of them make a beeline for the wallets of the wealthy.”

Aesthetic surgeons see themselves as sculptors in flesh; the need they satisfy is artistic. They are adapting a new technology to a job that has always been valued—in ancient Egypt cosmetologists were thought to have magical powers. And the work is very demanding. Since these surgeons treat healthy people, making them temporarily unwell for the sake of a subsequent improvement, the onus is heavy if things turn out badly: hell hath no fury like a woman scarred. The more elective the surgery is considered to be, the higher the expected standard of performance and the lower the tolerance for risk.

When cosmetic surgery goes well, the patient’s life is enhanced. It is psychotherapy performed with a knife. As in psychotherapy, most of the patients are women who want to be better off after treatment than they were before—and, as in psychotherapy, patients who do not feel better off are especially bitter. Some patients, men as well as women, credit the catalytic power of an improved nose or rejuvenated face with their professional advancement or romantic success. “The ripple effect of an anticipated outcome from esthetic surgery is hard to judge,” Robert M. Goldwyn, the editor of the journal *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* and a physician and author in the tradition of Lewis Thomas, writes in *The Patient and the Plastic Surgeon*. Goldwyn, a clinical professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School, continues, “Commonly, the plastic surgeon hears from patients . . . that ‘the operation changed my life.’ The more modest among us may believe that such a statement is hyperbole when, in fact, it may not be.”

Cutting Two Ways

GOODSTEIN and Hoefflin met in the late 1970s, and the two became friends when they were training at the University of California at Los Angeles, even though they could be poster boys for their respective regional stereotypes. Goodstein, the son of a kosher butcher from the Bronx, is a fast-talking Phi Beta Kappa graduate of City College. A man of medium height with an abundance of wavy brown hair and a bristly moustache, he has a warm smile and a friendly manner that evoke the good-natured fellow friends say previously inhabited his body. The current occupant is

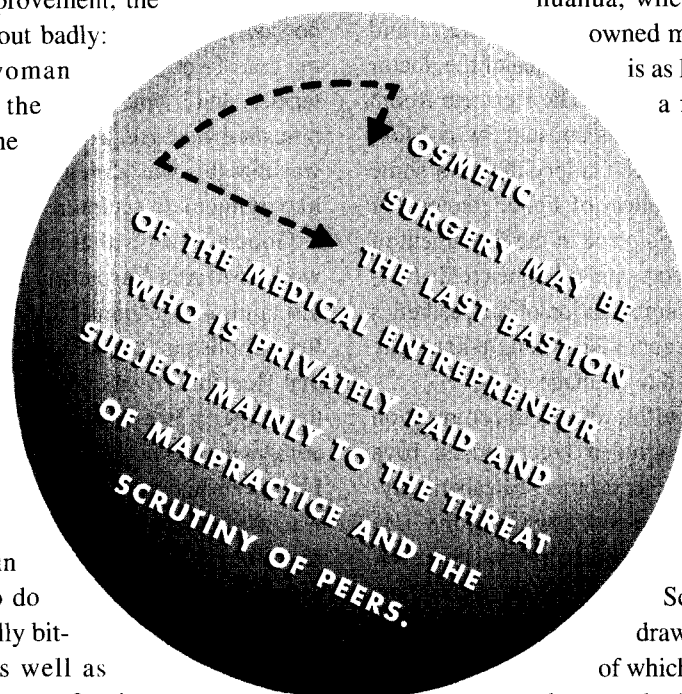
filled with passionate intensity. Although he enjoys a game of tennis or billiards, he doesn’t have hobbies, unless you count thinking. At a difficult time in his life he sought the consolations of philosophy by reading aloud to his wife from Will and Ariel Durant’s *Story of Civilization*. They got through nine volumes.

Hoefflin was raised in California and is part Mexican (one of his ancestors was the governor of the state of Chihuahua, where, according to Hoefflin, he owned more than 40 million acres). He is as laconic as Goodstein is voluble, a fitness buff who rises at dawn to jog and enjoys marathon biking, skiing in Aspen, and scuba diving off Fiji. A vegetarian triathlete, he is tall and well-built, with whitening hair and steady blue-green eyes that are set off well by surgical scrubs. He looks more like a television actor playing a doctor than like a real doctor, but he graduated first in his class from UCLA Medical School. Hoefflin is also gifted at drawing and at sleight of hand, both of which require the same collaboration between brain and fingers that surgery does.

As they embarked on their careers, Hoefflin and Goodstein each did a lot of emergency work, which is one of the ways in which young plastic surgeons improve their skills and support themselves. Emergency surgery is a tough life: the surgeon must be ready to reattach a finger or restore a battered face at 4:00 A.M. They both became involved in microsurgery and in major-burn care. Goodstein fondly remembers waking at six on Saturday mornings to help Hoefflin with his burn patients. “He was a person I really respected and cared about. He was talented, he was hardworking—I mean, there’s a reason for his success. He deserved it.”

Hoefflin joined a fashionable Westside practice and began to specialize in cosmetic procedures. He also began spending time at the Playboy Mansion, where he met music-business and film-industry people and other consumers of cosmetic surgery. He was renowned among the Playmates for his breast augmentations. Playboy Mansion regulars used to joke that there was a chute from the mansion to Hoefflin’s office, modeled after the chutes from the ski slopes to the hospital in Aspen, Colorado. Soon Hoefflin was the hottest surgeon in town, working nights and weekends to keep up with the demand for his services.

Hoefflin’s office, on a tranquil street in Santa Monica, is a pair of two-story red-brick quasi-Federalist buildings joined by a glass atrium. THE HOEFLIN BUILDING is inscribed on



an outer wall and on Hoefflin's stationery (along with his monogram), and is listed in the Santa Monica ZIP-code directory. Inside are consulting and operating rooms, two comfortable waiting rooms, and two large portraits of Hoefflin, a pastel and an oil.

As one of the many patient-education booklets in the office explains, the place is the realization of Hoefflin's dreams. The consulting rooms are designed around his interests: the Clock Gallery displays his collection of timepieces, the Magic Theatre his magic paraphernalia and memorabilia, and the Portrait Gallery sketches of the doctor drawn by many of his famous patients. The Heritage Room includes photographs documenting his unusual Swiss-Mexican background, and the Sculpture Gallery displays some of his own pieces. Upstairs is a gallery of signed photos that decisively establishes the doctor's place in the firmament of Hollywood stars, celebrity meteors, and other heavenly bodies. Evidence abounds that the bimboization of the aesthetics of the female form was not accomplished single-handedly by Hugh Hefner; the fantasy had to be made real.

When asked by the press, Hoefflin refuses to comment on reports that his patients have included Janet and La Toya Jackson, in addition to their famous brother; Elizabeth Taylor; Ivana and Donald Trump; and Sylvester Stallone. (He did tell *Muscle & Fitness* in a recent interview, however, "I've had the privilege of operating on some of the most glamorous people in the world.") His surgical fees greatly exceed the national average as reported by the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (ASPRS)—for example, his office recently quoted a fee of \$6,000 for bilateral eyelid surgery, as compared with the 1994 average of \$2,739—and are said to be even higher than the going rate among the celebrity surgeons in Beverly Hills. (Contra Adam Smith, the areas with the greatest concentrations of plastic surgeons also have the highest prices.)

GOODSTEIN advanced on a slower track. He developed a reconstructive practice at Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital, in Inglewood, and shared an office and an operating room with another plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills, where he did cosmetic work that consisted mostly of revisions of prior procedures. "When you're fixing problems from cosmetic surgery," he told me early in our acquaintance, "it's really, in essence, a form of reconstructive surgery, isn't it? It's just that you're doing it for cash up front. It has to do with Malthusian and Ricardian shifts, and in today's world you've got to follow Sutton's Law—Go where the money is."

In the spring of 1991 Goodstein, with some sadness, left the hospital, where the money wasn't, and became the below-the-neck man at Hoefflin's busy office, working as an independent contractor. Within a few months Goodstein began to focus on liposuction patients with rippled fat and other irregularities that can result from the procedure itself, known as "post-liposuction deformities." To correct such

problems, Goodstein first attempted SDL in August of 1991—around the time that the Food and Drug Administration first warned of problems with silicone breast implants, and a prudent time for Goodstein, who specialized in breasts, to develop another expertise.

Goodstein had always had his doubts about liposuction. "I was in the operating room in 1982 when Yves-Gerard Il-louz"—the French surgeon who is generally credited with being the father of liposuction—"demonstrated his technique," he says. "I was not impressed with the results. It seemed to me that if you were to get dramatic results, you had irregularities, and if you were conservative, you didn't have a significant difference. So I just stayed away from it. My thesis was that this was a pretty inaccurate way to remove fat. It's like trying to do sculpture with a vacuum cleaner."

Goodstein says that his technique was inspired by the work of Marco Gasparotti, a renowned Italian surgeon who disclaims any responsibility for it. According to Hoefflin, at first Goodstein had good patient results—good enough so that Hoefflin's own employees, including nursing staff, had the surgery. Hoefflin has also said that Goodstein "was a competent physician that I had worked with previously, and I believed his representation that this was a technique that was workable and safe." Indeed, Goodstein credits Hoefflin for referring many of the patients on whom he perfected his technique. Without the enormous attraction of Hoefflin's name, developing it would have been a slower process.

In September of 1992, after Hoefflin returned from a vacation, their rift began. Goodstein claims he had by then earned \$1.5 million from SDL, 50 percent of which had gone to Hoefflin, as part of their handshake agreement, to cover the office overhead. "When he needed the money I made from SDL, he didn't have a problem," Goodstein says. "Then, all of a sudden, it was dangerous. Also, I'd taken it above the neck, and that's his territory." Hoefflin has attributed his change of heart to Goodstein's increasing surgical aggressiveness, which, he claims, resulted in many complications.

On October 12, 1992, Goodstein performed his last surgery in the Hoefflin Building, and all previously scheduled surgeries were canceled. Goodstein continued to see patients for follow-up care until mid-November, when he was asked to leave. Goodstein says that when he left, Hoefflin told him he felt like a small French town after the retreat of the Nazi army.

An Embarrassing Scene

FIRST heard of Steven Hoefflin in 1989, at Zsa Zsa Gabor's trial for assaulting a Beverly Hills police officer. During recesses in the proceedings Gabor would work the room, showing off her line of imitation zircon jewelry. She concentrated her considerable charm on the judge's mother, a woman of her own vintage with well-coiffed gray



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hair and the handsome face she was born with. "Well, darling, you don't need plastic surgery, but perhaps in five years, perhaps the eyes. And I know just the man, the best in the world. He's a miracle worker, believe me; he has magic fingers." She spelled his name and gave his address.

When I became interested in writing about cosmetic surgery, I sought Hoefflin out. At first he was enthusiastic about being interviewed, but he reversed himself after the brouhaha in Boston at the 1993 Aesthetic Society meeting. The morning after, the front page of the Metro section of *The Boston Globe* was dominated by a large picture of Goodstein showing off the chin of the SDL patient. The accompanying story was a sprightly feature that focused on the controversy over SDL and quoted the backstage quarrel between Goodstein and Hoefflin.

Naturally, the society was displeased by this undignified display, which reiterated the themes of greed and hazard that had fueled the controversy over silicone breast implants, and exacerbated the image problem that has always afflicted cosmetic surgery. When the Aesthetic Society was founded, in 1968, it was denounced by the ASPRS, the major professional body in plastic surgery, which preferred to emphasize the far more respectable reconstructive surgery, whose reputation had been greatly enhanced by its achievements during the Second World War. Though most plastic surgeons performed cosmetic surgery, the leading journal, *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, avoided articles on cosmetic subjects; the first organized discussions of cosmetic surgery were not held until the early sixties, outside the country. Even today, when cosmetic surgery is accepted to a greater extent than ever before, its practitioners are dismissed by many other physicians, most of whom have less money, more paperwork, and a greater intimacy with illness and death.

The society found Goodstein's iconoclasm disturbing. Not only had Goodstein quarreled publicly with one of its most illustrious members (though in a letter to the *Globe* the president of the ASPRS called Hoefflin's as well as Goodstein's conduct "reprehensible"), but he had also misused its scientific forum. To many in the society it was clear that the man was a huckster and hungry for publicity. Why else the unseemly efforts to market his video and his cannula, including a flyer containing many misspellings and a misleading use of Hoefflin's name? And why else make the utterly inappropriate gesture of bringing a patient to the meeting, if not to attract press and photographers—as, alas, it did? What's more, in the society's view, the technique Goodstein was hell-bent on publicizing was dangerous.

The day the article in the *Globe* appeared, the society issued a press release, in the interests of "patient safety," with a position statement warning that SDL threatens the blood supply to the skin, that it removes too much fat too aggressively, and that it can have serious complications, including skin loss and irregularities in contour. SDL, the society said, "does not represent an innovation or advance in body con-

touring techniques." It was described as being merely a variant of methods tried and abandoned as problematic twenty years ago. A spokesman, Eugene Courtiss, of Harvard Medical School, worried particularly about SDL on the face, because "the aesthetic outcome of removing too much fat from the face can be devastating."

Two weeks later Goodstein fired off a point-by-point refutation of the position statement, claiming that "none of the devices used in the nineteen-seventies . . . have any functional resemblance to the instrumentation developed for SDL." He accused the society of prejudging his procedure without investigating it, and claimed that "further information and corroborating evidence was available for presentation; however, the atmosphere created at the Boston meeting precluded that possibility." Later Goodstein told reporters that "the complication rate in truncal and extremity surgery has been in the range of five percent and these complications consist essentially of temporary fluid collections or localized areas of skin breakdown which have healed without the need for surgical revision."

A Pariah

I WONDERED if this controversy was an example of peer review and medical self-regulation, restraint of trade, or a personal quarrel. So a few weeks after the Boston meeting I went to see Goodstein at his office, which was then in a third-story addition (called the South Penthouse) to a low-slung red-brick medical building in the Golden Triangle, as the business district of Beverly Hills is known in the grandiloquent local patois.

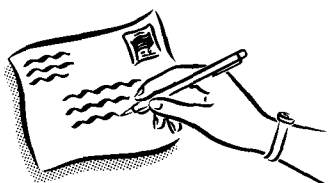
Goodstein greeted me from behind his desk. At his side, on a credenza, were a tray of sample breast implants and a vase of rather scruffy artificial flowers. On the shelves, in addition to medical books, were works by F. Scott Peck, Will Durant, Nietzsche, and Goodstein's favorite thinker, the Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus, whose theory inspired Thomas Carlyle to call economics a "dismal science."

Goodstein seemed cheerful enough, though very much the embattled loner fighting the medical establishment and hoping to use the press to make his case. "I want an honest presentation of this in the credible media," he told me, "because without that there are a lot of people that lose out. SDL makes permanent changes in people's bodies. It has made ugly ducklings Miss California candidates—stuff like this." In appropriate patients, Goodstein told me, he is able to rejuvenate the face without detaching, pulling, and suturing the skin, which means that the surgery costs less than a face-lift and leaves smaller scars. "It's the Holy Grail," he said. "Without suction this cannula will remove fat thoroughly and evenly from anywhere, superficial or deep. And when you remove the fat from right underneath the skin, the skin shrinks predictably, and thickens. SDL relies upon principles of wound physiology."

Goodstein complained that even though his technique has much in common with superficial liposuction, which is

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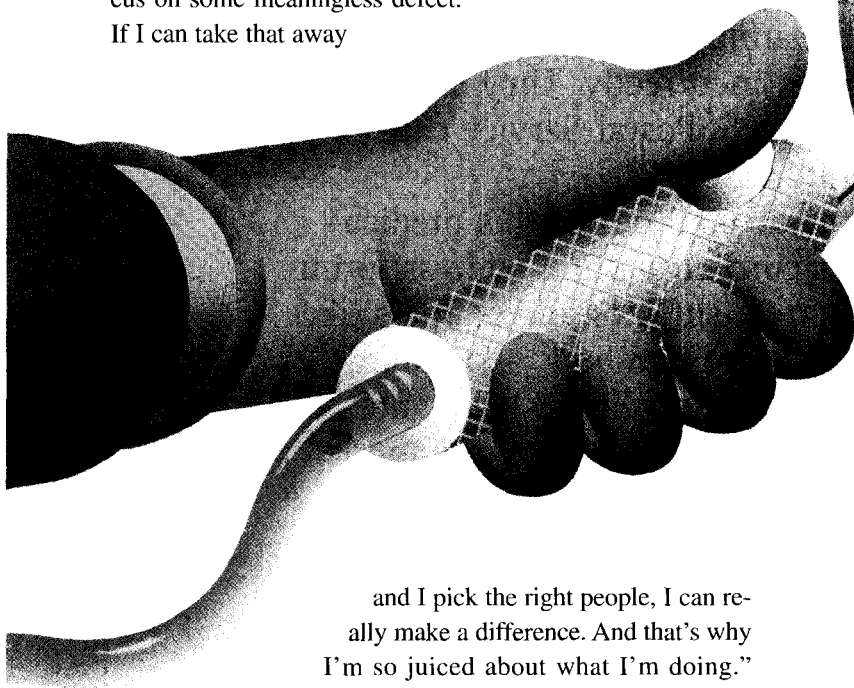
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widely practiced, he is still a pariah. He sees himself as an outsider—the innovator who has dared to extol the virtues of the zipper at the button-makers' convention.

Goodstein himself has experienced the benefits of a change in appearance. Until his late twenties he was crippled by a sense of inferiority to his brother Jordan, the elder by fifteen minutes, who got better grades and didn't have an ugly gap between his front teeth. When Wally got his teeth fixed, his life changed. For the first time he could smile without self-consciousness, and without benefit of psychoanalysis or even a self-help book he moved from neurotic misery to everyday unhappiness. With the addition of contact lenses and a moustache, he progressed from nerd to rake to a measure of contentment—which is one of the reasons he decided to specialize in plastic surgery.

"We'd be a much better species if we cared less about how we look," he told me, "but we do care. We tend to focus on some meaningless defect.

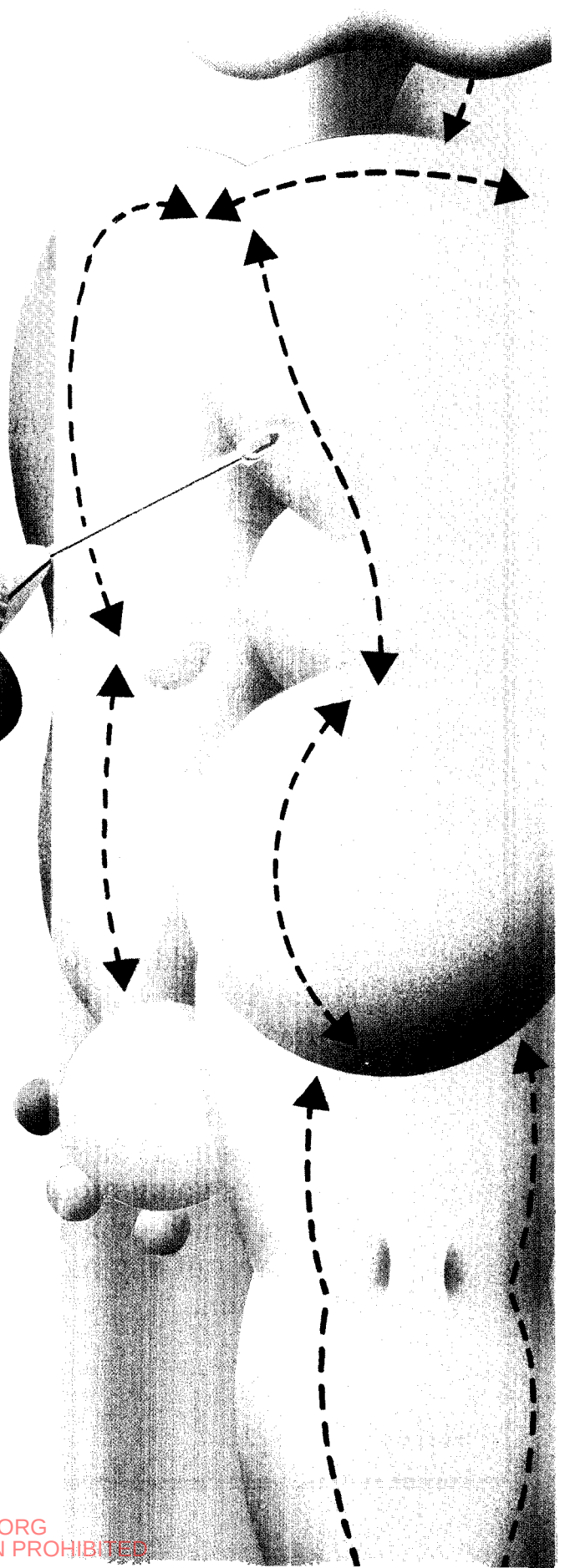
If I can take that away

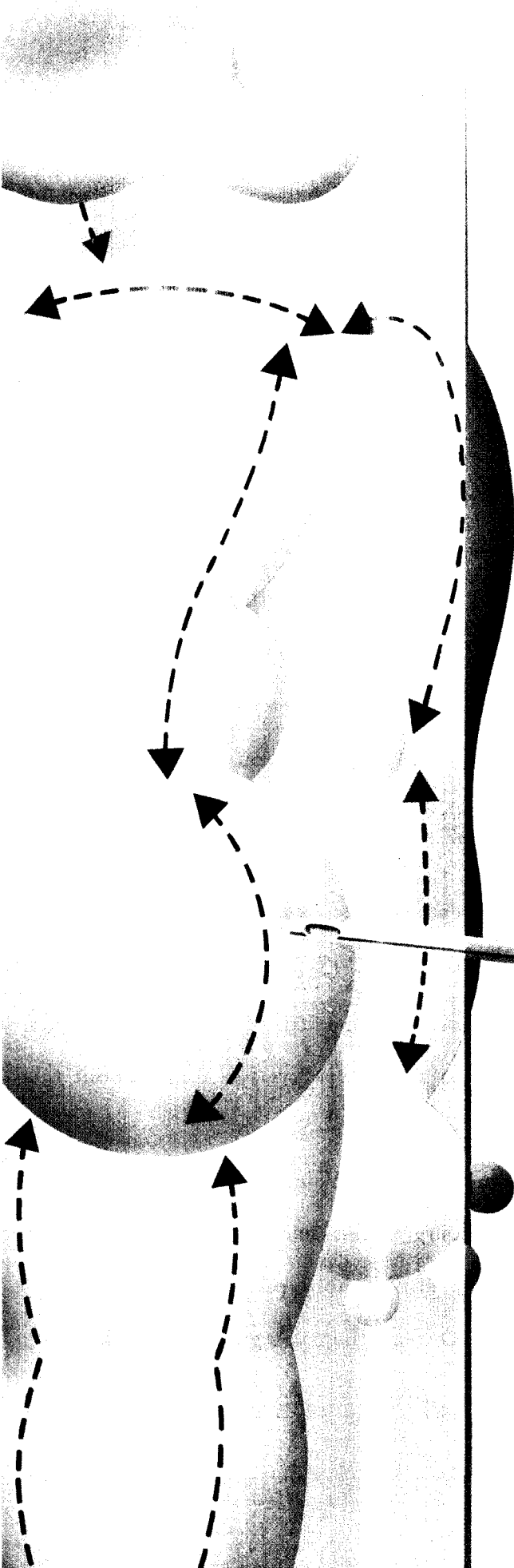


and I pick the right people, I can really make a difference. And that's why I'm so juiced about what I'm doing."

As Goodstein told me more about himself, he sounded like a victim of bad luck and worse judgment. For instance, in the mid-eighties Goodstein's best friend swindled him out of a quarter of a million dollars; the friend turned out to be a con man with twenty-eight sets of identity papers. Also, he claims that while he was working at Hoefflin's office, a patient only half satisfied with his seven-year-old nose job demanded half his money back and threatened to kill Goodstein when he refused to pay. Some months later, Goodstein says, his wife was robbed at knifepoint while sitting in their white Rolls-Royce in front of their house. Goodstein bought two guns.

Goodstein maintains that Hoefflin is threatened by his technique, though I could find no one who agreed with him. As one of their younger colleagues puts it, "Steve is doing the surgery he wants to do on the patients he wants to do it on." Whatever provoked the negative response to SDL at the





Aesthetic Society, it was the first of a series of assaults on Goodstein's work and character that seemed to multiply with Malthusian relentlessness.

Before our first meeting Goodstein had received a hand-delivered letter from Bertram Fields, who was then Michael Jackson's lawyer. The letter rattled the saber about medical confidentiality. (Hoefflin has accused Goodstein of many indiscretions about patients who passed through the Hoefflin Building during his tenure there.) Goodstein responded that he certainly knew a lot of controversial medical information. But, he told me huffily, "I'm not going to discuss it. This is something between Michael Jackson and Dr. Hoefflin, unless Michael Jackson decides to sue Dr. Hoefflin, or I do."

Shortly after Fields's letter arrived, Goodstein was paid a visit by Marc Gonzalez, of the Medical Board of California, the state agency that licenses doctors and investigates allegations against them. According to Goodstein, Gonzalez told him that an anonymous female had reported that Goodstein had been buying excessive amounts of cocaine from the pharmacy he used—an allegation he says he easily disproved. Goodstein flatly denies using drugs. (Hoefflin, too, has been the target of such rumors, which he also flatly denies, attributing them to Goodstein and to jealous rivals in an increasingly cutthroat profession.)

Then Goodstein

learned that rumors about his using cocaine had also surfaced at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where he had been on the attending staff for fifteen years. The hospital's disciplinary body, the Physicians Well Being Committee, sent a five-member delegation to visit him—an event Goodstein described to me as a combination of *Candide* and Kafka. As Goodstein recalls it, when the female member of the team expressed concern that he wasn't "getting enough hugs," he asked if she was making an offer. He did not take kindly to the committee's recommendation that he see a psychiatrist and submit to random urine testing. He refused to comply without a detailed list of the accusations against him, and accused one of the committee members of being a party to slander.

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From time to time Goodstein would call me to bring me up to date on the latest additions to his injustice collection. During the summer of 1993, Goodstein told me, five patient complaints against him were filed with the state agency—the first in all his years of practice. Three lawsuits were filed against him too, followed by many others.

Goodstein turned out to be virtually my sole source of information about his professional difficulties. No one else would or could break the secrecy that surrounds the alleged misdeeds of doctors. His colleagues spoke to me reluctantly and off the record. The institutions were opaque. A Cedars-Sinai spokesperson would not even reveal the rules that govern the medical center's disciplinary committee, let alone comment on the case. At the medical board Gonzalez was unable to confirm or deny that there was an investigation. Under California law, unless an administrative or criminal charge is filed—and one can be pending for years—patient complaints are considered confidential. Bills introduced in the legislature to permit fuller disclosure have been defeated by the California Medical Association.

This secrecy is rooted in the past, when medicine was quasi-religious, and flourishes today, when it is quasi-scientific. According to the sociologist Everett Hughes, medical secrecy is comprehensible as the almost instinctive attempt of the profession to cushion itself against its major hazard—error. Hughes explains that colleagues who consider themselves subject to similar work risks “will stubbornly defend [their] own right to define mistakes and to say whether one has been made. . . . It is perhaps the feeling that outsiders will never understand the full context of risk and contingency that makes colleagues so tight-lipped.” He also says, “To break such a silence is considered an attack against the group; a sort of treason.”

As professionals, doctors claim mastery over a field of esoterica, and patients must defer to their expertise. The professional's motto, Hughes points out, is not the businessman's *Caveat emptor* but *Credat emptor*—“Let the taker believe in us.” The patient's belief is essential, because it contributes to the physician's effectiveness. But mistakes are inevitable. A century ago J. E. Stubbs, M.D., in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, explained,

We do wrong when we do not try to cover up the mistakes of our brethren. There are many cases that require extreme surgical dexterity and a large amount of knowledge in or-

der to operate successfully; yet those who are operating all the time make mistakes. We have to do a great many things empirically, and if we tell people . . . this or that physician has made a great blunder, it hurts him; it hurts the community, because the opinion of the physician in the society is considered authority.

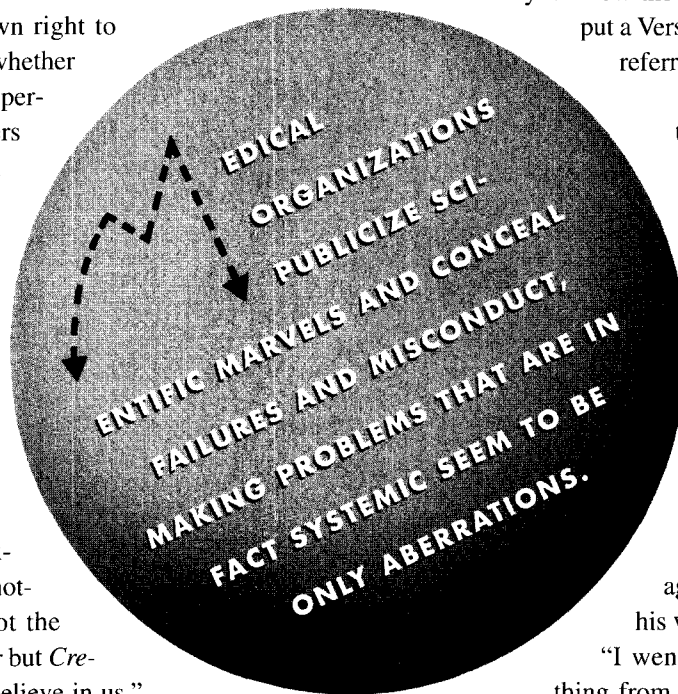
Since Stubbs's time, the medical profession has greatly enhanced its authority by engaging in multimedia efforts at image-making. Physicians have advised the television networks that have brought us kindly, heroic doctors and depicted medicine as an infinite resource—an idea that has enriched the profession at enormous social cost. Medical organizations publicize the latest scientific marvels and conceal professional failures and misconduct, making problems that are in fact systemic seem to be only aberrations. Secrecy and public relations combine to efface and enhance the truth.

Unhappy Patients

At the end of June, 1993, I received a telephone call from a woman with an Australian accent to whom “a little birdie” had confided that I was writing a story about Wallace Goodstein and SDL. She claimed that she had been disfigured by Goodstein, and agreed to meet me in the Beverly Wilshire coffee shop. “I'm wearing black-silk slacks and a white-and-gold Versace blouse,” she said. “Do you know the look? And sunglasses. And I'll put a Versace scarf around my head.” She referred to herself only as Mary.

The Versace Mary, as I came to think of her, was aggrieved, upset, fiftyish, and impossibly blonde and beautiful, with the naso-labial folds of a ten-year-old. She told me that Goodstein owned a gun; that he had bragged about having received death threats; that he had been booed by 800 surgeons in Minneapolis, or somewhere; that he was on drugs; and that she was a government witness against him. And did I know that his wife was divorcing him?

“I went to him to take a little something from here and here,” she explained, pinching her upper arm and lower back, “because I wanted to wear a certain dress to a party in five weeks—I told him four. And there was nothing wrong with my stomach. Look what he did to it.” She showed me snapshots of an oddly furrowed torso. “He worked over my entire body; he experimented on me.” She wanted to warn people, which I told her I'd be happy to help her do if she could substantiate



her case. She agreed to speak to her lawyer and call me back, which she did. But she said she couldn't be more forthcoming without jeopardizing the lawsuit she planned to bring against Goodstein.

This visitation, which I didn't mention to Goodstein, was less of an epiphany to me than it might have been, because he had previously told me that a rich society woman he had treated at Hoefflin's had complained to the medical board that he had brandished a gun at her—at a time, he said, before he even owned a gun. He had also told me about the death threats from the patient unhappy with his nose, but he never bragged to me of receiving them. In fact, he said of the incident, "I'm not proud of it." He ascribed the society woman's dissatisfaction to her infatuation with Hoefflin and a narcissistic character disorder. "I just don't see a complication in this case," he told me. Her last photographs, he claimed, showed an improvement over her original condition.

Some weeks later Peter Bela Fodor, then the liposuction expert in Hoefflin's office, called to introduce himself. (He later said he couldn't recall initiating our contact.) A well-known surgeon from New York, he is a past president of the Lipoplasty Society of North America, an editor of several professional journals, and a member of the Aesthetic Society's immediate-response committee on body sculpting. "So, you see, I wear many hats," he told me in a debonair basso profundo. Wearing his Aesthetic Society hat, Fodor had helped to write the position paper warning of the dangers of SDL. Now he wanted to send me an editorial that had appeared in *Technical Forum*, a professional journal I'd be unlikely to see, which he thought would be of interest.

The piece was headlined "NO GOOD, GOODSTEIN! BIG MISTAKE," which pretty much characterized the tone in which Tolbert S. Wilkinson, the editor, took Goodstein to task:

It wasn't so much that he was pushing a technique that has certainly proved to be hazardous in the most skilled hands. It wasn't that he mentioned that he had redone many of his ex-partner's patients, naming the surgeon. If he had picked on Joe Blow from East Jesus, Texas, it would have provoked perhaps less condemnation than the fact that he named a very prominent and excellent surgeon with whom he had once been associated.

The surgeon in question is a contributor to *Technical Forum*, writing an occasional column called "Tips From Steve."

Fodor later provided me with several critiques he had written for various journals. When we met, he explained that since he had moved to Los Angeles, in January of 1993, it had fallen to him to fix a dozen serious and possibly irreparable SDL complications (none on the face), several photographs of which he produced—unidentified, to protect the patients' confidentiality. Two other plastic surgeons told me that they had seen serious complications too. But by late autumn of that year I had heard from no unhappy patients

except the Versace Mary, although I had made it known that I was looking. As one surgeon said, "Look, nobody wants to tell the world her thighs are a disaster."

Goodstein scoffed at talk of nameless patients who had suffered complications, and produced a list of patients willing to be telephoned by the press; several other patients sent me letters and faxes supporting Goodstein, and agreed to be interviewed.

One of the patients I met through Goodstein, Amber Lynn, had also been a patient of Hoefflin's, having had her eyes, nose (three times), and breasts (twice) worked on. At twenty-nine, she was a veteran of several other surgeries as well. When the two worked together, Hoefflin had suggested that Goodstein rather than he operate on her breasts, assuring her, Lynn told me, "If I didn't think he was the better man for the job, he wouldn't be here." Lynn had heard about Hoefflin at the Playboy Mansion ten years before, and she considered him a friend. Just before Christmas of 1993 she called Goodstein, in some desperation, because Hoefflin had told her that her overly large breast implants could not be made smaller without complications. To Lynn, a former star of pornographic movies who is now the highest-paid performer on the exotic-dance circuit, this was a matter of as much economic consequence as a face-lift might be to a fifty-year-old executive. After Goodstein fixed her breasts, raised the bridge of her nose (she had never really been satisfied before), and sculpted the lower half of her face with SDL, she praised him as a gifted and caring surgeon and extolled the virtues of SDL.

But, Lynn told me, after six months and two additional breast surgeries by Goodstein she had "a clawlike ripple" on her breast and was unable to work as an exotic dancer for quite some time. "I trusted him, and now I come to find out a very harsh reality: I have now seen the other side of him. I want to warn the girls out there about plastic surgeons. They tell you, 'I'm God, I'm going to fix you. . . . Don't worry about that, that's my job,' and when it doesn't work out, they give you every excuse in the book. Then they don't take your calls." She said that she was now Hoefflin's patient.

"It saddened me about Amber," Goodstein told me when I asked him to comment on the case, "because I really tried to help her, and I thought I did good work—and so did she, at first. She turned on me for unfair reasons—there are transference factors at work here. Now I probably would not be so quick to think that surgery is the answer for somebody like Amber."

Perhaps the most persuasive evangelist for Goodstein and SDL is a forty-four-year-old lawyer who had 6,000 cubic centimeters of fat (about twelve pounds) removed from her hips and thighs. This genetic endowment had resisted less-abrupt techniques, including diet and exercise. The lawyer told me that she had tried liposuction, which left her looking worse than before. Like many women who elect such surgery, she sought not so much physical perfection as invisibility. SDL, she said, made it possible for her to wear a

bathing suit and play tennis without self-consciousness; it corrected a condition that made her feel ugly and subject to stares and ridicule. She calls that a miracle. (Even Hoefflin called her result good.) Last March, Goodstein did SDL on her face, and she says she is "a thousand percent for it."

Goodstein energetically plied me with information. He was given to flamboyant displays of openness that I supposed were intended to convince me of his candor and win me over. He was certainly more winning than Hoefflin, who declined to be interviewed about Goodstein and urged me not to write this story. His lawyer sent me a letter saying, "To the extent there is a disagreement concerning a problematic professional technique, Dr. Hoefflin feels strongly that this type of dispute should only be discussed and resolved in a professional forum."

Goodstein encouraged me to interview his estranged wife, his girlfriend, and the psychologist who is his closest confidant; "I have nothing to hide," he said. As Fodor's publications appeared, Goodstein supplied me with copies. He faxed me letters from the lawyers of patients who were suing him, one of whom I recognized as the Versace Mary, and copies of his letters to the lawyers acting in his defense. He sent technical articles about liposuction, Jungian parables, an affectionate Christmas card from a patient who had filed a complaint about him. He invited me to accompany him while he was tested for drugs (I declined, but he faxed me the results, which were negative) and to sit in on a meeting with his malpractice attorney (the attorney and I agreed, but the attorney's boss, at what was then Goodstein's insurance company, refused to allow me to go). And he showed me a letter that he said Hoefflin had handed him and then pulled away and torn into pieces. Goodstein had retrieved the pieces and taped them together. The handwritten letter, dated August 3, 1992, reads, "As a friend and fellow doctor, I am trying to talk with you about some serious problems. You are not listening. Please listen to me, understand, and do something about it before a disaster occurs in your life. I care about you." It was signed "Steve."

Permanent Scars

BECAUSE Goodstein had always maintained that he had encountered no serious complications, and because of the circumspection of the other side, I was surprised when I received anonymously in the mail a copy of a complaint that had been submitted to seven government agencies, including the Medical Board of California, by a Beverly Hills businesswoman. The woman claimed that she almost died following SDL: her blood hemoglobin level was five (critically low), and she needed immediate blood transfusions. According to the complaint, after Goodstein removed 5,500 cubic centimeters of fat from the patient's stomach, upper arms, neck, and thighs, she developed pulmonary and other problems that sent her to the intensive-

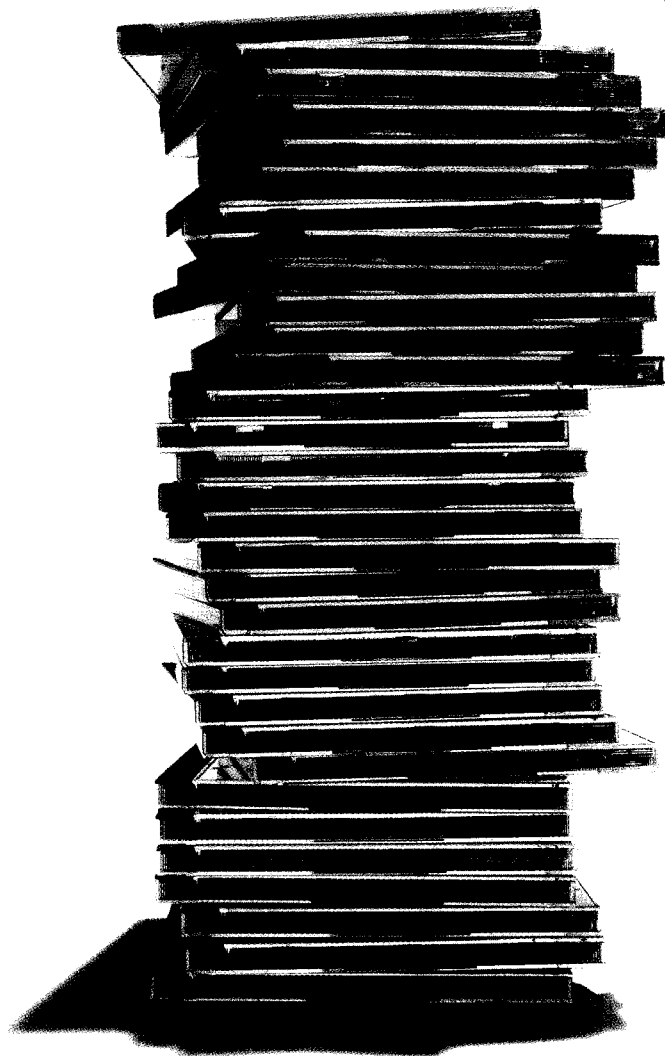
care unit and kept her in Cedars-Sinai for a week. Her left thigh swelled so severely that the skin split, leaving a wound fourteen inches long and four inches wide that became infected and took five months to close. She was bedridden for six weeks, and still suffers from numbness and constant edema in her legs. "This doctor must be stopped before he can ruin one more life," she wrote in a letter that accompanied the complaint. "How could the medical profession permit such travesty to its responsibility of guarding . . . our most valued possession, our health. Those of us who have been harmed must band together."

I called the woman, and visited her at her home in Beverly Hills. She was wearing a glittery oversized T-shirt and leggings. Though it had been a year since the surgery, swelling was still visible in her legs and feet. She struggled against tears when she recounted her ordeal. With slightly trembling bejeweled fingers she rolled down her leggings to show me the scars—some of them, she said, from where Goodstein, who had visited her daily, had stabbed her thighs with scissors to release the fluid he believed was the cause of her constant fever. "It was like the shower scene from *Psycho*," she said. The previous summer she had visited the Mayo Clinic and been told that the large scar was permanent and that she also had permanent damage to her lymphatic system. "Can you imagine trying to look better and winding up this way?" she asked, adding that she is nonetheless "determined not to dwell on this."

She had heard about Goodstein from Kathi Tompkins, her masseuse, an SDL veteran who had worked with post-SDL patients and who told her about the wonderful results that Goodstein achieved. The patient's husband was for it too. After years of losing and gaining weight, she herself had been ready to do something drastic that would make her "thin forever." She claims that Goodstein said she could go from a size 12 to a size 6. She would have been satisfied with a size 8.

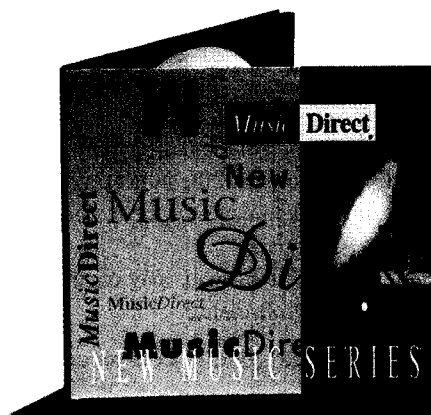
It was not to be. What she resented more than the failure of the technique, she told me, was Goodstein's apparent inability to accept responsibility for it. "It was like he was God," she said. "You couldn't disagree with him." He became verbally abusive, she claims, and blamed her when her body grew larger instead of smaller.

He still does. Goodstein's account of this case differs greatly in emphasis and in many particulars, but he and the woman agree that her goal is to destroy him. And they agree that the root problem here is psychiatric, though they disagree on the identity of the mental patient. She maintains that he is a megalomaniac who has lost touch with reality to the extent that he cannot recognize a dying patient. ("He almost lost me," she says, "and he didn't know it.") He insists that she undermined her own recovery by eating compulsively, by failing to wear the compression garments required for several months after surgery, and by exercising prematurely. (She claims that she never deviated from his instruc-

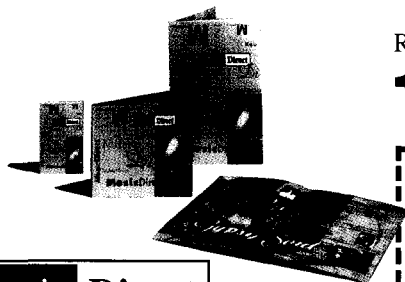


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tions.) He attributes some of her medical problems to other physicians she consulted.

But he blames himself, too, for making a disastrous error in patient selection. And he no longer removes more than 2,500 cubic centimeters of fat at a time. "This is how progress is made," he told me. "You go forward until you come to an obstacle. Then you learn and move on. Doctors aren't perfect, and I regret having done this surgery. But one case doesn't invalidate the whole procedure. I've helped many more people than I've harmed."

Is Liposuction Beneficial?

IN a 1983 editorial in *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* called "The Advent of Liposuction," Robert Goldwyn described what usually happens when a new surgical method is introduced.

1. Its discovery may precede by years the wider recognition of its value.
2. Later uncritical enthusiasm accompanies initial acceptance.
3. After the stampede toward the new, a more accurate picture gradually emerges of the indications, advantages, and disadvantages of the method.
4. Improvements occur.
5. The technique, once established, may continue as useful or may fade as obsolete.

"In this world, undiluted good is conspicuous by its absence," Goldwyn wrote, and he warned his readers to "note and remember the caveats before leaping on the bandwagon to 'fat city.'"

Liposuction was indeed first scorned by the same plastic-surgery establishment that later sought to monopolize it. In 1989 eleven deaths from liposuction which had occurred since 1982 were reported to the congressional subcommittee investigating the safety of cosmetic surgery. The actual number of fatalities to date is shrouded in secrecy, because there are no reporting requirements. Nevertheless, according to recent surveys of plastic surgeons, the procedure today is extremely safe.

More than a decade ago Goldwyn observed in his editorial that liposuction "offers an unusual opportunity for basic research into fat metabolism, body energy and obesity," but there is still a paucity of such data. "The procedure is popular—patients are willing to pay for it," Goldwyn recently explained to me. "It's comparatively easy to learn and safe to do. So from clinicians there's been a flurry of methods to improve the technique but a relative dearth of basic research into fat. I wish there would be more. And I've not seen much long-term follow-up. The surgeon has little incentive to do it. If you've successfully removed someone's melanoma, the longer you follow him and he is tumor-free, the happier he'll be; but if you've done a successful face-lift, it will look better at one year than at four—that's the nature of aging. Since

the longer you follow patients, the worse it will be, many surgeons quit while they're ahead."

Two years ago Goldwyn's journal published a small study designed to address the metabolic and morphological consequences of liposuction, written by, among others, Robert H. Eckel, an endocrinologist at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center who is an expert on an enzyme that regulates fat storage. "The evidence suggests that there is a metabolic defense of body fat," Eckel explained to me when I called to discuss the study. "However fat is removed, it tends to come back. This is why most dieters fail, as perhaps you've observed. In animal studies, when fat is surgically removed from one place, it reappears there or someplace else. The immediate effectiveness of liposuction is obvious, but there is no good science that suggests a long-term benefit from the surgical removal of fat. On the basis of what I know about fat metabolism, I would not recommend liposuction to a friend or a patient."

Timothy Bartness, a biologist at Georgia State University who studies obesity using Syrian and Siberian hamsters, wonders whether large volumes of fat removed from subcutaneous pads will grow back around the visceral organs in human beings the way they do in rodents, with possibly serious health effects. This hypothesis could be tested using today's imaging devices.

Plastic surgeons, however, base their claims that liposuction works on clinical experience—which is also the basis of Goodstein's claims about SDL. The claims made on behalf of liposuction reflect more than a decade's worth of the combined clinical experience of many surgeons. Yet clinical experience is inherently subjective, and such assessments have been mistaken before. In the first twenty years of this century facial defects were fixed with paraffin injections; these were later discovered to be hazardous and were abandoned.

This pattern is not specific to cosmetic surgery. In addition to the achievements of surgery, its history in this country includes a series of widespread fads for procedures—such as tonsillectomy, hysterectomy, radical mastectomy, and, more recently, spinal surgery and surgery for benign enlargement of the prostate—that when rigorously studied were found to be sometimes unnecessary, ineffective, or worse. The lobotomy is perhaps the most regrettable example. No government agency comparable to the Food and Drug Administration is charged with overseeing surgical procedures.

"There are far fewer randomized, statistically valid clinical trials in surgery than there are with medical therapies," Arnold S. Relman, a professor at Harvard Medical School and the editor emeritus of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, told me recently. "In part it's the nature of the beast—it's hard to do such studies. And in part it's because of the nature of the surgeons. They don't stand still for that kind of thing, and they often don't believe in it. They prefer to fly by the seat of their pants." Surgeons tend to be more interested

in advancing and perfecting their techniques than in figuring out whether and in what circumstances they work. "Partly because of the growth of managed care and economic pressures from insurers," Relman added, "we're moving in the direction of evaluations and comparisons among therapies, including surgery—which is all to the good."

Sequelae

IN October of 1993 Goodstein received a letter from his insurance company informing him that it would no longer insure him for SDL, as it was in agreement with the critique that had appeared in the Aesthetic Society's position paper. The following February the company wrote him again, this time refusing to renew his policy. His malpractice coverage ended in May of 1994; he can legally operate in his office, but not in a hospital—which hasn't been an issue since March of 1994, when the Physicians Well Being Committee suspended Goodstein from Cedars-Sinai. He is suing Cedars for \$10 million, and has also sued his insurer for terminating in bad faith.

Nearly two years after he had first been in touch with the medical board about Goodstein, the husband of the Beverly Hills businesswoman wrote it again demanding action. "I am crazed by your inability to stop this menace from maiming innocent people," he declared in the letter, a copy of which was given to me. When I called, he told me that Hoefflin had done all he could to care for his wife and other Goodstein patients with complications—often, the man had heard, at no charge. On behalf of other former patients "who have been scarred for life and formed what perhaps might become a vigilante group," his letter continued, the husband of the patient pledged "to do whatever it takes" to remove Goodstein from practice and "to reveal to the world the ineptness of the Medical Board of California."

In a 1994–1995 Public Citizen Health Research Center evaluation of state medical boards, California tied for thirty-fourth place. That year the board received 11,465 complaints against physicians, of which 2,041 were investigated. Sixty-five licenses were revoked. The board, which is dominated by physicians, often must drop investigations for lack of "clear and convincing" evidence—the legal standard required in the state to challenge a medical license. This is only slightly less onerous to meet than "beyond a reasonable

doubt." The California statutes are designed to protect physicians from false accusations. The medical lobby is very strong.

The California economy has been weak, and Goodstein is beset by financial woes. He was forced to sell his house, and for a while his fifteen-year-old Porsche (vanity plate ESTHTK) was taken to satisfy creditors. It has been some time since he moved to a less expensive office on the "Miracle Mile," and some time since attrition claimed his secretary and his office manager, who had been with him for fifteen years. Now Kathi Tompkins, the masseuse, who lives with Goodstein (and is the SDL patient who was pictured in *The Boston Globe*), is his only full-time employee. When she is massaging patients, Goodstein answers the phone.

By Goodstein's count there have been nine SDL lawsuits against him, most of which have been dropped. Three of the plaintiffs had the same attorney, who ultimately withdrew from the lawsuits be-

cause, he said in a sworn statement,

Goodstein "has threatened to kill many people." The attorney added, "He has pointed guns at his co-workers and a female friend of his. He may have a drug problem, making him volatile, irrational, and violent. Dr. Goodstein neither has insurance nor do I feel he is likely to have assets, considering the plethora of lawsuits filed against him."

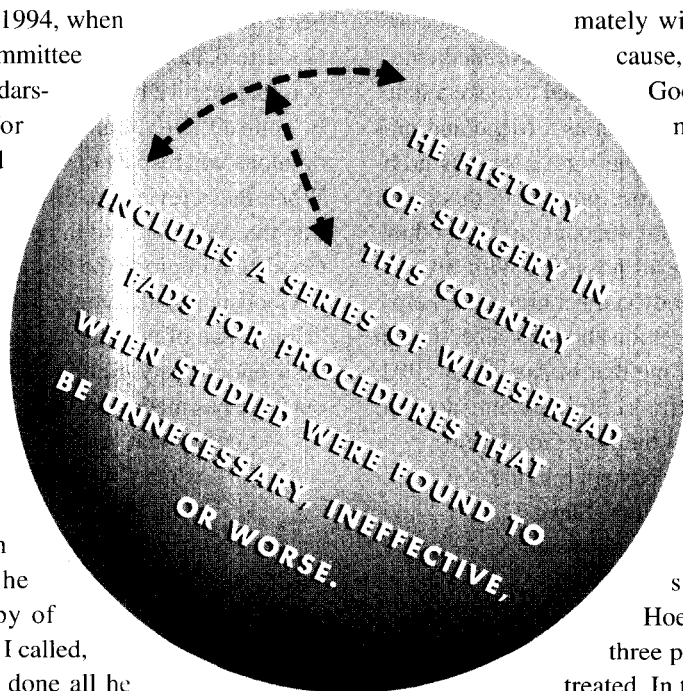
Goodstein gave me that statement, and also copies of Hoefflin's depositions on behalf of three patients whom both doctors had treated. In two of the depositions Hoefflin was asked, "What were the circumstances of Dr.

Goodstein's [leaving your] office?"

In September of 1994 he replied, "I became aware of his utilizing drugs and witnessed him doing it and had requested that he get some help. I was aware of some patient complications that ensued around that period of time, and we canceled his surgeries and requested that he leave the office."

In February of last year Hoefflin replied, "I was concerned that his operative technique was becoming more and more aggressive . . . and until I saw a resolution and appropriate addressing of that problem, I did not want him to operate further. There was a difficulty in—shortly before he left—in communicating with him on both a personal and professional basis, and I was concerned. . . ."

In a third deposition, taken last August, Hoefflin was asked whether he had changed his story about Goodstein's



using drugs and replied, "I don't believe so." Hoefflin also responded to several other allegations Goodstein had made, denying that he had taken any steps to have Goodstein's hospital privileges withdrawn or that he had instigated the cancellation of Goodstein's surgeries in October of 1992. His staff had canceled them "unbeknownst to me," Hoefflin said. "They did not want him operating on patients, and then they came to me and I formalized the fact. . . ."

Earlier in the August deposition Hoefflin said, "I walked in on [Goodstein] when he was using cocaine in my office," and produced photos he had taken of a blue plastic case filled with a white powder. Hoefflin said that when confronted, Goodstein "admitted this [case] was his, but then later he showed me that it was filled with contact-lens enzyme. Okay? This was filled with cocaine, all you have to do is taste a little bit under your tongue. . . ."

Hoefflin said he was sensitive to drug problems because he had spent ten years working with an "impaired physician" and "it's not an unknown situation in our field of medicine." Near the end of his deposition Hoefflin asked to make a statement. "I care a lot about Dr. Goodstein as a friend and professional," he said. "I truly believe he's got a serious problem. I'm also concerned about those present in this arena about his potential for violence with weapons, and I just think something should be done if at all possible. With my discussing it openly, I hope somebody can get him some help."

Goodstein still denies the allegation about cocaine, though he recalls the incident. He told me that in August of 1992, not October or November, Hoefflin confronted him, accused him of using drugs, and pressed the note Goodstein had showed me into his hand. Goodstein told me that when he said, "Don't be ridiculous, Steve," Hoefflin accepted his explanation of the powder. "I assumed Steve believed me, since he grabbed the note, tore it up, and threw it in the wastebasket. Also, he took off for Europe with his sons, leaving me in charge of the office. I don't think he would have done that if he thought I was a cocaine addict."

Hoefflin retains his high profile. He made a media splash last summer when he

jumped off the Santa Monica Pier and rescued a 200-pound suicidal man. With the help of his companions—a local TV medical reporter and Heidi Fleiss, the madam—and with the aid of the Harbor Patrol, Hoefflin got the victim out of the water and into the hospital. When it turned out the man was unemployed, Hoefflin offered him a job in his office.

"It was all in a day's work," Hoefflin declared in November, on the syndicated television talk show *George and Alana*. A few weeks later *People* magazine quoted Nancy Sinatra in praise of the "brilliant" job he had done on her breasts.

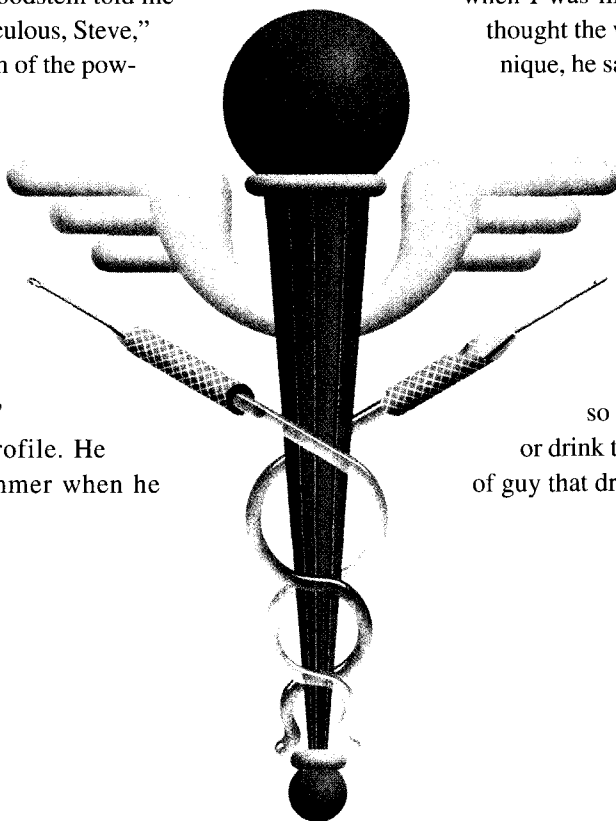
Last spring Goodstein submitted an article to *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* on SDL of the face and neck. When the article was rejected, Goodstein wrote a letter to Robert Goldwyn, the editor. In it he protested that the (anonymous) peer reviewers were prejudiced by the reception accorded his work at the 1993 Aesthetic Society meeting, which had been mentioned in one of their critiques. In his reply to Goodstein, Goldwyn wrote, "I would like very much to have you feel that we have dealt with your article and, particularly, yourself fairly. Can you suggest a couple of people whose opinions you respect to whom I could send the manuscript?" When these reviewers disagreed with each other, Goldwyn cast the deciding vote in favor of publication, provided that Goodstein improve the illustrations.

Goodstein will comply with Goldwyn's request and says, "I'm in awe of how far he's gone to be fair to me," and that he is enormously gratified "that this work is finally getting out." He has mellowed since I first met him; he conceded recently that "there might have been a period of time

when I was like the guy with the hammer who thought the whole world was a nail." His technique, he said, has become less, not more, aggressive, and his faith in it is undiminished.

"When you believe in something and the world doesn't accept it, part of you thinks that it's not worth living in the world that won't accept it," he told me in 1993 and reiterated recently. "And

so you're motivated to either prevail or drink the hemlock—and I'm not the kind of guy that drinks the hemlock." ☞



Two Poems

by RODNEY JONES

FIRST COCA-COLA

Maybe a sin, indecent for sure—dope,
The storekeeper called it. Everyone agreed
That Manuel Lawrence, who drank
Through the side of his mouth, squinting
And chortling with pleasure, was hooked;
Furthermore, Aunt Brenda,
Who was so religious that she made
Her daughters bathe with their panties on,
Had dubbed it “toy likker, fool thing,”
And so might I be. Holding the bottle
Out to the light, watching it bristle.
Watching the slow spume of bubbles
Die. I asked myself, could it be alive?

When they electrocuted Edwin Dockery,
He sat there like a steaming, breathing
Bolt, the green muscles in his arms
Strained at the chair’s black straps,
The little finger of his right hand leapt up,
But the charge rose, the four minutes
And twenty-five hundred volts of his death,
Which in another month will be
Thirty-five years old. So the drink fizzed
With the promise of mixtures to come.

There it was. If the Hard-Shell
Baptists of Alabama are good and content
That the monster has died, so am I.
I swallowed. Sweet darkness, one thing
Led to another, the usual life, waking
Sometimes lost, dried blood in the ear,
Police gabbling in a strange language.
How else would I ever gauge
How pleasure might end, walking
Past midnight in the vague direction
Of music? I am never satisfied.

BEAUTIFUL CHILD

Because I looked out as I was looked upon
(Blue-eyed under the golden corm of ringlets
That my mother could not bring herself
To have the barber shear from my head)
I began to see, as adults approached me,
That hunger a young woman must feel
When a lover seizes one breast too long
On the ideal nipple-balm of the tongue.
When they lifted me and launched me
Ceilingward, I seemed to hang there years,
A satellite in the orbit of their affections,
Spinning near the rainspot continents
And the light globe freckled with flies.
I could smell the week-old syrupy sweat
And the kerosene of many colognes,
Could see the veined eyes and the teeth
Dotted with shreds of lettuce and meat.
When I touched down, one of them
Would hold me to the torch of a beard
And goose my underarms until I screamed.
Another would rescue me, but leave
On my cheek the heart-mark of her kiss.
So I began, at three, to push them away.
There was no ceremony and few words,
But like a woman who has let a man go too far
And, in one night’s moodiness, steps
Out of a parked car and walks home alone,
I came suddenly to my life, and they
Did not begrudge me, but turned back
To the things they had done before—
The squeaking bed, the voices late at night.
Mornings I’d crawl beneath the house,
Dreaming how poignantly tragic my death
Would seem, but, having thought about it,
I happily took myself into the darkness
Of the underground, where I was king.



For Everyman, by Everyman

*In creating himself according to the
nation's enthusiasm for his songs, Irving Berlin
helped to create a national
identity*

DO pop tunes have an afterlife? A new three-volume scholarly edition of the early songs of Irving Berlin, published for the American Musicological Society, suggests that all music, whether pop or classical, passes from inspiration to dissertation, living on as fodder for musicologists.

by **David Schiff**

I recently decided to test Berlin's suitability for the full scholarly treatment in the privacy of my home. As I began singing and playing through all 190 of these songs, written from 1907 to 1914, I thought I had finally discovered the secret to being the life of the party. The first few songs, for which Berlin

wrote the words only, had an irresistible klutzy charm in their rhymes:

Oh Marie, 'neath the window I'm
waiting
Oh, Marie, please don't be so
aggravating . . .

Impatiently I wait for thee here in
the moonlight,
Don't be afraid, my dusky maid, this
is a spoonlight . . .

I hit pay dirt with the seventh song,
"Sadie Salome (Go Home)"

Don't do that dance, I tell you Sadie,
That's not a bus'ness for a lady!
'Most ev'rybody knows
That I'm your loving Mose,
Oy, oy, oy, oy
Where is your clothes?
You better go and get your dresses,
Ev'ry one's got the op'ra glasses.
Oy! such a sad disgrace
No one looks in your face;
Sadie Salome, go home.

Mel Brooks could not have undone Richard Strauss any better. I was ready to invite all my friends over.

Pounding on through the sixty songs of Volume I, I soon found I wasn't having fun anymore. It was a long, long haul through a slew of forgettable "coon" songs, "kike" songs, "guinea" songs, and "kraut" songs to get to "Alexander's Ragtime Band." There are no forgotten musical gems here. Out of 190 songs you may know only "Alexander" and "Everybody's Doing It Now"—and you probably have to be at least fifty to remember the second, either with its original lyrics or with the raunchier street lyrics I learned as a kid in the post-Second World War Bronx.

In his introduction to *Irving Berlin: Early Songs*, the musicologist Charles Hamm provides an exhaustive guide to the songs, breaking them into categories (ballads, novelty songs, ragtime songs, show songs) and subcategories (high-class, rustic, domestic) with the acuity of a structural anthropologist. He makes no claim for their musical value; this edition is clearly meant as a form of musical archaeology, taking us back to the prehistory of pop music.

And once you become acculturated,

these songs can seem closer in spirit to today's popular music than to that of the "golden age." Most of them are mechanical, vulgar, stereotype-ridden, and sexually suggestive. They take place in the amoral anomie of the modern city, where a man can send his wife to the country ("Hurrah! Hurrah!") and think about making love to his secretary. It's a world of distinct ethnic enclaves, each with its own predictable dialect and obsessions. Jews are all named Mose and Sadie and think only about money. Italians talk-a like dis. Blacks strut their stuff and roll their eyes, singing of dear ol' Dixie. Offensive? Yes, but with minor alterations they sound like proto-MTV. The prehistory of pop music is a lot like its post-history.

JEROME Kern once wrote that Irving Berlin was not part of American music—he was American music. It was a generous compliment, but wrong. Berlin cannot be made to stand for all of American song. Yet it would be equally misguided to view him as a kind of classical composer and study his complete works in order to trace his personal artistic development. A printed overview of Berlin's oeuvre may in fact obscure the vital connections to other songwriters and performers who were essential to the existence of popular song. It will, however, provide clues to the mysterious character of the songs' creator.

Irving Berlin eventually earned a reputation for being the premier American tunesmith, mainly because he kept writing hits over five decades, and also because so many of his songs—"God Bless America," "White Christmas," "Easter Parade," "Oh How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning," "There's No Business Like Show Business"—became quasi-official national anthems. These songs seem to have been written for Everyman, by Everyman. Their author seems invisible, inscrutable, without a definable style or voice. Alec Wilder, in his great study *The American Popular Song*, nails down the idiosyncrasies of Jerome Kern, George Gershwin, and Richard Rodgers, but throws up his hands in attempting to find Berlin's musical fingerprints. Berlin was the Homer of the pop tune, and also its Zelig. Perhaps the early songs provide a key to his ubiquitous anonymity; in any case they reveal something about our

evolving national identity. Berlin—as much as the moguls of Hollywood, some of whom were his childhood friends from the Lower East Side—created a new American landscape and then disappeared into it.

Before I read the excellent biography of Berlin by Laurence Bergreen (*As Thousands Cheer*) and the loving, intimate memoir by Berlin's daughter Mary Ellin Barrett, I had formed my own picture of him, based on the songs and on Abraham Cahan's great 1890s novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (a favorite, by the way, of the lyricist Ira Gershwin). Cahan tells the story of a Russian immigrant who achieves success in America by completely destroying his inner life; he becomes a shell, relentless in his business pursuits and incapable of any feelings—and yet not a monster.

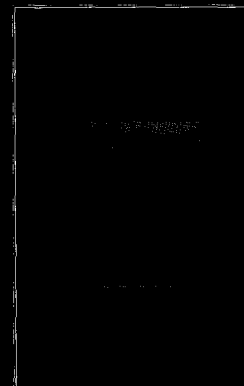
Berlin did not lack for emotions, but he had no problem exploiting them either. When his first wife died, shortly after they married, he wrote "When I Lost You," a sad waltz that, Bergreen says, "was the only song Berlin ever admitted had a basis in the events of his life." When it became a hit, he started turning out sappy waltzes by the yard, most of them forgettable, but others, such as "Always" and "What'll I Do?" and "All Alone," even bigger hits than "When I Lost You."

Berlin's rise from poverty was even more astonishing than Levinsky's. Starting with nothing on the Lower East Side, sleeping in flophouses on the Bowery, he earned a vast fortune by the time he was thirty and married Ellin McKay, the daughter of one of the richest men in America. Although he never lost his East Side accent, he assumed the privileges of wealth as one to the manner born; his daughter describes a life of quiet, tasteful luxury marred only by her father's long bouts of depression, during which he would become even more invisible than usual, shutting himself off even from his family.

BERLIN'S success, unlike Levinsky's, depended on more than hard work and business acumen—though in his life there was plenty of each. Born in Russia, with Yiddish as his first language, Berlin was to use language itself as the medium of his self-invention. Language for him was not something fixed

Barber is a poet of enormous gifts and, already, no small mastery.—ROSANNA WARREN

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and traditional; it was an assemblage of exploitable accidents. According to legend, even his name was the result of a typographic decision. A publisher reduced his first name to "I." on the cover of the sheet music of his first song, "Marie From Sunny Italy," which led the nineteen-year-old Israel Baline to re-create himself with the names of an American author and a German city far from the Russian shtetl of his birth. He simultaneously took on the airs of old Knickerbocker New York and of the uptown German Jews who had already assimilated into American society.

Like Ira Gershwin and Groucho Marx, Berlin heard English through the ears of an immigrant for whom sound and sense were in a state of constant recombination. I suspect that even before they learned English, many Jewish lyricists had experienced another culturally specific linguistic subversion. In Hebrew schools, then as today, the language of the prayer book was learned syllabically, with exercises in which arbitrary combinations of consonants and vowels only gradually turn into words: *bah, baw, beh, bu, bi, boo*. Students rapidly manipulate sound symbols that are completely detached from meaning; many learn their prayers with no idea of what the words mean. No wonder they can develop a sense for interlinguistic puns and internal rhymes that native speakers never notice.

As Philip Furia shows in his eye-opening book *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley*, Berlin's contribution to the American language was "ragged" rhyme, a mating of the immigrant's fractured perception of English sounds with the dislocated rhythms of ragtime.

Hear that trombone blowin' hon',
Ain't dem fiddles goin' some?
Oh! sir, Oh! sir,
cuddle up closer,
Squeeze me like you would a
flower,
Make a minute last an hour.
("Oh, That Beautiful Rag," 1910)

Even the mood of self-pity that Berlin worked over and over again could be lightened with ragged rhyme:

All by myself in the morning,
All by myself in the night,
I sit alone
With a table and a chair,

So unhappy there,
Playing solitaire . . .
("All By Myself," 1921)

Berlin had pushed ragged meter to the outer limits by 1930:

Come let's mix
where Rock-e-fellers
walk with sticks
or "um-ber-el-las"
in their mitts,
puttin' on the ritz!
("Puttin' on the Ritz," 1928)

Furia connects Berlin's assault on language with the techniques of the imagist poets. The fusion of Yiddish rap and African-American ragtime turned out to be the decisive step in the emergence of Berlin's nondenominational, non-ethnic American identity, and also in the emergence of a new kind of national song literature. As many critics have noted, "Alexander's Ragtime Band" is not ragtime, and it appeared after the ragtime craze was over. But it transformed ragtime, a regional and ethnic music, into a definition of American identity.

The ups and downs of popularity could be a heavy burden for a composer. From his daughter's memoir I learned that Berlin was a poker player, and it occurred to me that his appearance of impersonality may have been a protective mask—a poker face. A songwriter has to live with the luck of the draw, and when Berlin went hitless he would fall into deep depression. It must have been unsettling to write so many songs and have some of them—thirty, say, out of thousands—become hits while most of the others soon vanished. Berlin was not naive (he was part of the Algonquin Round Table), and he certainly had his formulas. He claimed, with the appearance of false modesty, that there were just six Berlin songs, with endless variants. And he knew when he had a sure winner, such as "White Christmas," which he announced to friends was the greatest song ever written. Yet in general the fate of songs is as unpredictable as the public mood. Believing that the quality of a song was measured solely by its popularity, Berlin suffered from the very mystique that made him a national hero.

I WOULD like to think that the reason for the success and staying power of so many of Berlin's songs was his skill, even genius, as a songwriter. Why do the best ones live on to the extent that they do? And what about them is unique to Berlin? In spite of Alec Wilder's bewilderment and Charles Hamm's indifference, it is possible to get at the intrinsic quality of Berlin's songs.

Let's start with some of the facts of Berlin's creative life. He and Cole Porter were the only great songsmiths to write both music and lyrics; as most of Volume I of *Irving Berlin: Early Songs* shows, Berlin began as a lyricist. It's well known that though he was no concert pianist, he could get around the piano, but only in the key of F sharp (on the black keys). He could neither write down nor harmonize his songs—he could barely even sing them. Throughout his life he depended on copyists and harmonists, who never claimed that they had composed the songs themselves, and attested to the fact that Berlin knew what he wanted harmonically when he heard it.

For Berlin, then, a song was a wedding of words and melody. This may seem self-evident, but it is quite different from the case of, for example, George Gershwin, who always wrote the melody first and was deeply interested in harmony. A great Gershwin song—"Nice Work If You Can Get It," for example—is as much a harmonic composition as a melody. To understand its structure one has to look at the

elegant contrapuntal relation between the melody notes and the bass.

In contrast, Berlin's right hand did not know what his left hand was doing; he was a pure melodist. If you play through Berlin's songs, you soon find that many are ineptly harmonized, often with

the bass simply doubling the melody. Even "Blue Skies," which is built on a solid descending bass line, loses its focus in the bridge. And yet it would be a mistake to say that Berlin's songs lack musical discoveries—just listen to the way "Always" swerves out of key in the eleventh bar of the chorus ("need a helping hand, I will understand") and suavely finds its way back three bars later ("always, always"). That kind of harmonic surprise is



really a melodic invention—Berlin just took the ninth and tenth bars of his tune and moved them up two steps. The harmony had to tag along behind melodic intensification.

Berlin was famous for composing at a piano that allowed him to change keys while always playing in F sharp. I think the picture of him hunting and pecking on the black keys may be misleading, though. His songs are full of accidentals and out-of-key turns that he

could not have played on the black keys alone—and it's hard to imagine that he discovered them by manipulating the pedals that moved his keyboard from one key to another. I assume that like most composers, Berlin composed with his brain as well as his fingers, and that he figured out how to use his keyboard to find melodies he had already composed in his head. The shapes of these melodies reveal Berlin's distinctive genius: because he did not have a conscious command of harmony, he had to make his melodic lines all the stronger.

Berlin brought his idiosyncratic technique to the most rigorously circumscribed musical and poetic form since the days of the troubadours or the great haiku poets. The tunesmith had to say "I love you" in just thirty-two bars, divided squarely into four eight-bar groups, and the melody had to be singable and memorable. Its range could not exceed an octave by much, and it had to have a "hook" that would set it apart from other songs.

The words were just as tightly prescribed as the music. Berlin usually set himself a double task in the lyrics: his songs have a verbal tag and tell a story. Usually the tag is a casual phrase: "What'll I do?," "Let's have another cup o' coffee," "Come on and hear," "God bless America." Berlin's first inspiration as a composer, I suspect, was the rhythm of the tag. He had a genius for giving common American phrases the nervous musical impulse of the modern city. Over and over he discovered the syncopation in ordinary speech rhythms: "Anything you can do I can do better." (As an aside, I'll note that today's music has singularly failed to bring contemporary English to a similar state of life—a fail-

ure symbolic, perhaps, of larger failures.)

Once he had his tag in place, Berlin could begin to tell a tale. Most of the early songs are really nothing but vaudeville vignettes, presented in the opening section, or verse, and punctuated by a refrain, or chorus, on which the audience probably joined in. "My Wife's Gone to the Country (Hurrah! Hurrah!)" unfolds a surprising story of extramarital liberation. Brown's wife leaves home with the chil-

dren to escape a heat wave. Brown takes out an ad in the newspaper announcing the fact, and then sings it into a recording phonograph, rips down "GOD BLESS OUR HOME" from the wall, tells his friend Molly "I love my wife, but oh!

you kid," and, when he starts to lose his voice, teaches a parrot to sing the joyous refrain. It's a strangely self-reflective plot: the husband does not turn into a philanderer, he turns into a songwriter, and his story becomes the song. As in many of Berlin's songs, music, rather than being the vehicle for emotional expression, is both the source and the outcome of the emotion.

Berlin's later songs, like most popular tunes of the twenties and on, have verses that are shriveled into mere introductions and choruses that are the heart of the composition. Here the story had to be told within the strict shape of the main melody, and so every note counted. "All Alone" is an object lesson in how to tell a story in four melodic phrases. One: "I'm alone." Two: "Waiting by the phone." Three: "Thinking if." Four: "You're alone too." The melody is a link between one lonely person and another, and the melodic line is an arch, moving, unusually, to a climactic high note in the third eight-bar unit (the bridge) and then, equally unusually, retracing its steps. The final phrase, instead of repeating the first, turns it upside down and backward, so that one loneliness balances out the other. Each phrase of the song introduces an element—a prop, an emotion, a person—that was not there before, so that by the end we feel we've traveled quite some distance in space and feeling. Is the song sad or happy? It starts with a sob and ends with a smile; there's a novel in that.



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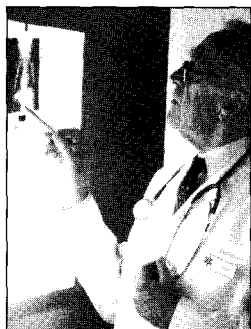
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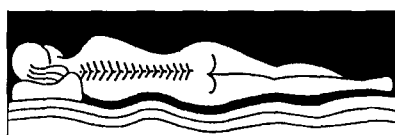
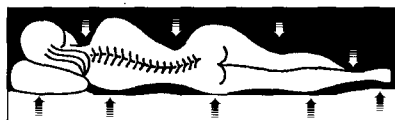
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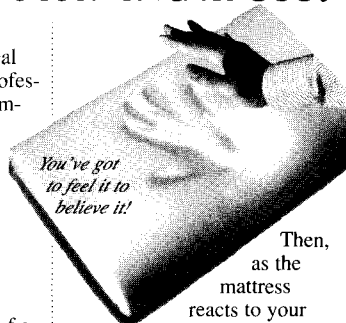


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FOR many critics, "Cheek to Cheek" is not only Berlin's masterpiece—as memorable "as 'Wagner's Wedding March,'" Wilder says—but also No. 1 in the genre associated with Fred Astaire, which also includes Kern's "I Won't Dance" and Gershwin's "They Can't Take That Away From Me." Some competition! It shows, too, how far Berlin had come from "Sadie Salome." The song swings and sizzles because it is a series of expanding gasps of pleasure. "Heaven": Berlin set the word like an unexpected tingle, took its two-note figure up the scale with growing intensity, and then walked it back down to the intimacy of "cheek to cheek"—you can feel the brush of skin in the rhythmic bounce of that tag. The phrases of the chorus are twice as long as usual, and so Berlin wrote two different bridges, the first dippy ("Oh I love to climb a mountain . . ."), the second impetuous ("Dance with me"). The song is so expansive that the return of the opening musical phrase has to feel like a letdown, and most singers and arrangers take the liberty of expanding it—listen to Sarah Vaughan spin it out into ecstasy. Despite the giddy sexuality of the song, though, it still has Berlin's typical faux naiveté (which you can hear the sassy Vaughan mocking). The song isn't about the joys of sex, it's about the joy of dancing—another of Berlin's displacements of emotion into a musical performance. Music is a prophylactic for Berlin. All his songs seem a little safer than we want them to be.

Perhaps because of their emotional inhibitions, Berlin's songs, even the sad ones, feel more like jingles than arias—they are advertisements for themselves. It's all there in "Alexander's Ragtime Band." The tag: "Come on and hear," with its teasing hint of blues and syncopation. The build-up: the tag is repeated so that it hangs on the sixth degree of the scale—not the expected, more consonant fifth. First surprise: the bugle call. The setup: repeat of the opening phrase but with the words changed—"Let me take you by the hand." The payoff: "the Swanee River played in ragtime"—not only the high note but a coronation. Berlin takes the laurel crown from Stephen Foster, and we realize that Berlin is Alexander, the leader of the band. It's a song about nothing but its own unstoppable ambition—the immigrant dream in excelsis. ☼

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The Java Theory

The Internet might someday replace the personal computer—but for now only conventional software can get you where you need to go

THE personal-computer era is about twenty years old, dating from some point between the founding of Microsoft, in 1975, and the introduction of the IBM Personal Computer, in 1981. People have continually marveled at how fast everything is changing. But never before have the fundamentals of the business changed as quickly or as dramatically as they have in the past year and a half, because of the sudden popularity of the Internet.

Less than two years ago an auditorium's worth of high-powered computing executives watched in fascination as one of their

colleagues demonstrated something called the World Wide Web. (A report on the meeting appeared in the July, 1994, issue of this magazine. For those joining us late: The Internet is the supernetwork that links computer networks around the world.

"The Web" is a graphically oriented system that makes it easy for someone using one computer connected to the Internet to inspect and collect information from another computer connected to the Internet, no matter where those computers might be. Such transactions have been possible for years, but the Web allows users to perform them

merely by clicking on little symbols, which are connected to files or other computers in a series of hypertext links.) Now children in elementary school have their own Web pages, and beer and car companies put their Web-site addresses in their advertisements.

The popularity of the Web has enriched certain companies, particularly Netscape, which makes the most popular "Web browsing" software, and Sun Microsystems, the leading supplier of the "server" computers on which the Internet runs. It has also raised questions about the future of the industry's dominant firm, Microsoft—a debate that has important implications for all computer users.

The debate concerns whether the growth of the Internet will strengthen or dilute Microsoft's ability to set standards for the software industry. For more than a decade Microsoft's great achievement has been to have its operating systems—first MS-DOS and then Windows—accepted as the nearly universal standard for IBM-style computers. This guaranteed an ever-increasing cash flow, since the sale of nearly every computer meant the sale of a Microsoft operating system.

by James Fallows

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It also made Microsoft's word-processing programs, spreadsheets, and other software more attractive than their competitors from, say, Borland International or Lotus Development Corporation, since customers knew they would always be compatible with Microsoft operating systems. Last summer, as the company prepared to release its ballyhooed Windows 95 software, which comes with a built-in Internet connection, those most fearful of Microsoft's influence worried that the company was about to project its standard-making power onto the Internet as a whole. Within a few years, they said, the Microsoft Network might crush CompuServe, America Online, and other commercial networks, and some Microsoft-created browser might supplant Netscape as the industry standard.

Shortly after the release of Windows 95 the members of another camp made their surprising, and opposite, case. They said that far from strengthening Microsoft, the rise of the Internet might impose a limit on the company's expansion and influence. According to this line of reasoning, the question was not whether Microsoft's software was better or worse than anyone else's but whether most kinds of software people now buy were about to become less important.

THIS argument involves the programming language Java, which was developed by Sun Microsystems and which suddenly became famous at the end of last year. The idea behind Java, to oversimplify, is that it could make a computer work like a telephone. The nation's telephone network is an enormously complex software-and-hardware combination, but the average user does not need to think about its complexities for a minute (except for the horror of selecting among long-distance plans). You buy whatever phone you want; you plug it in; it works. When the companies offer some new service—call forwarding, voice mail—you don't have to buy extra memory chips for your phone or get an upgrade for your telephone software, as you would in the computer world. You keep using your old phone.

And so it could be in the world of computers, according to the Java theory. Java is a way to let your computer borrow and use programs that exist on the central network—like the switching and call-forwarding programs on the telephone net-

work—even though you have never bought or installed them. If you were working on a financial problem, you might locate an Internet site that had data you wanted. Using the Java protocol, that site would instantaneously ship you the most up-to-date version of the particular spreadsheet or statistical routines you needed to analyze the data. When these "applets," or small program components, had solved your problem, they would disappear from your machine. Presumably, in some way not yet specified, you would pay a small fee somewhere, as you do for use of the different services available by telephone. You wouldn't need to worry whether you had found the right files for the latest release of your favorite program. Your computer wouldn't need to be a huge battleship, with more raw power than ran the Apollo project and with hard drives capable of storing gigabytes of complex programs. It would simply need to be able to connect to the Internet and receive and run programs sent by Java (which is compatible with nearly any kind of computer and nearly any operating system). Conceivably Java could lead to the production of stripped-down "Internet terminals," costing \$500 or so, which could turn up where pay phones do today. Rather than take portable computers with them, people could send messages from an Internet terminal in one airport as they departed and collect them from another after they arrived.

This vision of telephone-like computers, busily touted by Sun representatives since late last year, might never come true. In the short term it faces the ugly reality that existing Internet phone connections are just too slow and overtaxed to handle the high-capacity traffic a Javaed world would require. When I visited Sun's headquarters last fall and watched a Java demonstration by Eric Schmidt, the chief technology officer, an embarrassing slowdown kept the demo from loading at all. Even Sun's internal lines, it seemed, were congested, because end-of-quarter financial data were being passed around.

Last December, Microsoft seemed to acknowledge the importance of Java when it said that it would license the technology for use with its software. Immediately another of the religious wars that always surround Microsoft's actions broke out in the computer world. Some people said this was a sign that Microsoft, ever

realistic, had abandoned hope of bending the Internet to its own standards. Others said that Microsoft, ever resourceful, would figure out a way to put its own proprietary stamp on Java—much as the company had done a decade before when it made the Macintosh-like graphic interface part of its own Windows.

This argument will play out over the next few years, while we wait for phone lines to become fast enough to give Java a serious trial. In the meantime, the idea behind Java—that the Internet, which we cannot see or really imagine, will take over functions now performed on the computer—applies to the part of computing that has always been the most interesting and will become increasingly valuable. This is the ability to find information that we actually want.

SOME computer functions are so deeply ingrained in modern life that they are no longer interesting: word processing, E-mail and data transfer, spreadsheets and financial analysis. The programs that handle these functions are mature and complete enough to be merely tools. At the other extreme are tasks that will never be successfully computerized. I am convinced that I will never see a computer that can take a recording of normal conversation and convert it into text, or one that can translate a document from Japanese to English without numerous howlers. In between are the interesting challenges—the tasks that are hard but not impossible for computers and potentially very valuable for users.

Information retrieval is at the top of the list. If our own computers give us information by the ton, the Internet can provide it in Krakatoan quantities. It is sometimes hard to find anything whatsoever of value on the Internet, with so many sites listing such things as the personal TV-show preferences of people you have never met or showing “live cam” shots of office workers in Germany. Finding the particular facts you are looking for can seem impossible. Yet in the long run the Internet, which links together many of the world’s data resources, should be the ideal research vehicle.

Tools are available for finding information in the limited universe of one’s own desktop computer, and for now they are indispensable, if space-hogging and sometimes cumbersome. Back in the

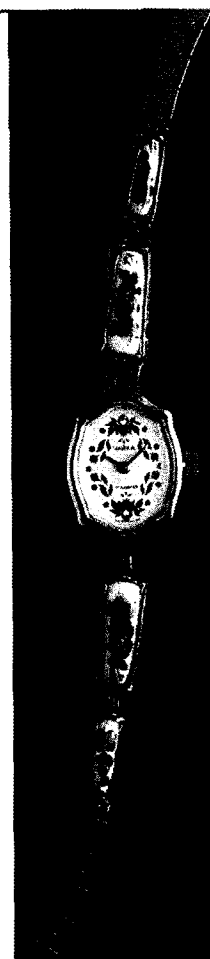
primitive old DOS days, I relied on two now-orphaned programs from Lotus—Magellan and Agenda—to search for a fact or name in some long-forgotten disk file, and to organize the facts thereby retrieved. (Sorry: once again you’ll get no Macintosh references from me. If I had had perfect foresight, I would have started down the Mac road a dozen years ago, because Macintosh systems, while more expensive, are much less harassing to use than IBM PC-style models. But I took the road more traveled.) I still find Agenda indispensable when I want to organize data for a writing project. Like the 1964 Mustang, it has been replaced but not improved upon. For bulk storage of research material—interview notes, material scanned in from newspaper or magazine clippings, citations from online sources, and so on—I have come to love and rely upon a program named askSam.

When it made its debut, about ten years ago, askSam was a nerd’s delight, from its peculiar name to its arcane command structure to its ugly on-screen appearance. Its compensating virtue was its ability to search large quantities of data quickly. Its newest release, version 3.0, is attractive and easy to use and yet is faster and more powerful than ever. I dump all my research data into a big askSam file (once, my file totaled nearly fifteen megabytes) and within a second or two I can call back any particular document or clipping, using askSam’s index of keywords. (The askSam company’s phone number is 800-800-1997. A stripped-down but perfectly adequate version of the program costs \$149.95. The full-scale “professional” version, which can handle larger files and has other features, costs \$395.) As one who still believes that the IBM operating system OS/2 Warp is faster, stronger, and more reliable than Windows 95, I also use a phenomenally speedy Warp retrieval program called Search Manager/2, which can find names or phrases not just in the askSam research files but anywhere on my hard disks. (It costs \$79, from Indelible-Blue, 800-776-8284.) While I’m at it, I should mention that the new release of Xerox’s optical character-recognition software, TextBridge Professional version 3.0, does the best job I’ve yet seen of converting printed material into text for a computer. The basic version of TextBridge sells for about \$75 from mail-order houses. The “professional” version,

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But with Java in mind I ask myself, Why should I have these huge research files on my computer at all? Only a tiny fraction of their bulk represents material that can be found nowhere else—my own interview notes, E-mail, and so on. Most of it is information I wouldn't need to keep on the premises if I were sure I could find and use it when I wanted to. Java proponents say they can spare us from building up stockpiles of programs that we rarely use. Why shouldn't they spare us needless data buildup too?

For one limited set of people this prospect is already a reality. A decade ago journalists following a theme or story kept big yellowing stacks of clippings on their desks, usually until the desks themselves disappeared. Now few of them bother with clippings, because they know they can get a citation when they want it from Lexis-Nexis, the nearly all-inclusive compilation of newspaper and magazine stories, plus TV and radio broadcasts, which is owned by Reed Elsevier. The most obvious drawback of Lexis-Nexis is its very steep cost. Fees are customized for each client, but they range from several hundred to several thousand dollars a month and essentially rule out the service for people not associated with some large institution that can afford it. Even if more people could afford it, Lexis-Nexis would still be significantly limited as a guide to the information network of the future.

The problem concerns its "search engine." Nexis, like most of today's searching programs and databases, works on the principles of Boolean logic that most of us learned in junior high school. The most important words in the Boolean dialect are "and," "or," and "not." If you wanted to use Nexis to find an article that compares President Bill Clinton or Jimmy Carter with Harry Truman but doesn't mention Lyndon Johnson or Dwight Eisenhower, your query would start out "Clinton OR Carter AND Truman AND NOT Johnson OR Eisenhower." Endless refinements go on from there, such as specifying when the article appeared ("Date is 1995") or that the names occur close enough to each other that they're likely to be logically related in the article. For instance, "(Clinton OR Carter) W/20 Truman" would find appearances of the names within twenty words of each other.

Boolean searches on Nexis are extremely fast and accurate—as long as you know exactly what you are looking for. But if you have a more general query, or if you do not pose your question in precisely the right form, Boolean searches can lead to random, surprising results. If the article you were thinking of appeared one day before or after your target period, or if the names you were looking for were twenty-one rather than twenty words apart, or if owing to a newspaper typo "Clinton" became "Clnton," you would not find those articles, and you would never know how close you came.

This is much better than having no search system—modern journalism could hardly exist without Nexis—but it is still an imperfect tool. Nexis also offers a non-Boolean search system, called "free-style," which allows you to launch more-general queries—"Show me information about IBM's profits." In my experience freestyle searches are even less effective than the Boolean process in helping locate the data I am looking for.

Some of the most intriguing research now under way in computerdom, which I will describe in another article, involves efforts to impose a "find what I mean" index-and-searching structure on the now-uncharted tracts of the Internet. Mitchell Kapor, the founder of Lotus, has argued that this effort won't go anywhere until some equivalent of the Dewey Decimal System is applied to databases around the world. Only with an idea of where an article or research paper fits into the general structure of knowledge, he says, can the limits of hit-or-miss Boolean searching be overcome.

IN one little corner of the Internet something like Kapor's plan has already been applied. Along with the Dewey Decimal System, one of the most ambitious attempts to categorize information is the "Propaedia," or "Outline of Knowledge," long a part of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The existence of the Propaedia may in turn explain why the best glimpse of the possibilities of a usable information network may be the one offered by the stodgy-seeming old *Britannica*.

After nearly a decade of preparation the company introduced two electronic versions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the past year and a half. The *Britannica* is available on a CD-ROM now sell-

ing for \$495, but anyone who has a modem and an Internet connection should instead consider the Web-based version. It is less expensive (\$150 a year for family use); its database is updated regularly; and, as in the Java vision, it doesn't care what kind of machine you use. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* telephone number is 800-323-1229; its Web address, where you can sign up for a seven-day free trial of the program, is <http://www.eb.com>.

The *Britannica's* designers used the Propaedia, ingeniously, as an answer sheet against which to judge the success of their retrieval system. Their existing Propaedia structure told them which articles, from various parts of the encyclopedia, should be pulled up by a general query. ("Why did the League of Nations fail?" "Which animals have the longest life spans?") Thus they could adjust the weight of their numerous "search algorithms" to come as close as possible to pulling up all the relevant articles. These algorithms, or formulas, measure the frequency of a word's appearance in an article, whether it shows up in a headline, its proximity to related terms, and, among other factors, whether it takes on a different meaning when used in a compound—for example, "social security," which has a meaning distinct from that of its component words.

The power and nuance of the resulting system is remarkable. I vaguely remembered that Sir Christopher Wren had been commemorated with a significant inscription in London. I typed in "What is Wren's epitaph?" Within two seconds, and after two clicks of the mouse, the screen displayed several paragraphs about his tomb in St. Paul's Cathedral, which is marked with the phrase *Lector, si monumentum requiris, circumspice*—"Reader, if you seek a monument, look around." I could have found this in the paper encyclopedia, if I had bothered. But next I asked "What was the history of slavery in Latin America?"—and I would never have bothered to track down the dozen or so related articles, from several different volumes, that this inquiry produced.

The *Britannica's* searching system is not perfect, but it has always given me something useful. It even reminded me of something I used to know: that Boolean logic is named for the English mathematician George Boole, 1815–1864. I have not yet seen it make an embarrassing mistake. That move it leaves to the user. ☼

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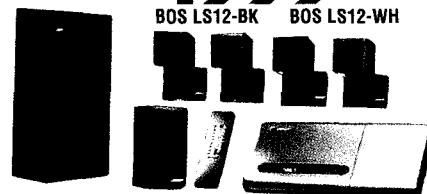
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by Jack Beatty

**THEY ONLY
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Why Progressives Will
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by E. J. Dionne Jr.
Simon & Schuster, 336 pages,
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“BEHIND our New Deals and New Frontiers and Great Societies you find, with a difference only in power and nerve, the same sort of person who gave the world its Five-Year Plans and Great Leaps Forward—the Soviet and Chinese counterparts.”

The person who wrote that, in a book published last year, sees no essential difference between the democratically elected governments led by Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy and the dictatorships of Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong. Not one reader in 10,000 could guess the author's name, though it is easy to conclude that he is a political imbecile. Who else could believe such nonsense? The majority leader of the House of Representatives, that's who: the redoubtable Dick Arney. That Arney holds a Ph.D.

says more about the state of American education than all the headline-grabbing studies about teenagers who can't place the Civil War in the right half century. The kids are only dumb pending knowledge; Arney is ignorant by ideology. But let E. J. Dionne take it from here:

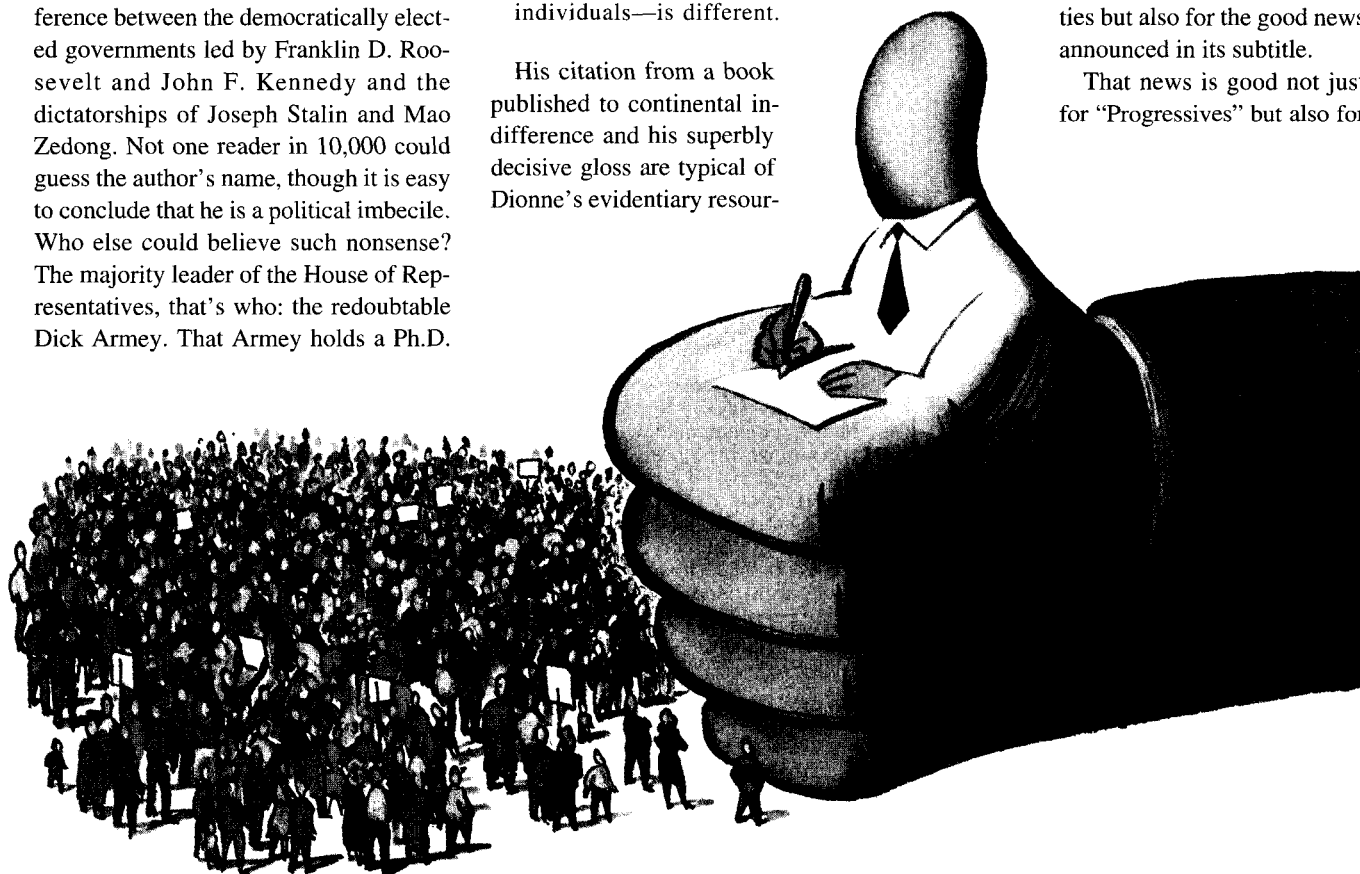
This sort of thinking is now so common that it has been forgotten how radically different it is from the tradition on which the United States was founded—a tradition to which contemporary liberals, moderates, conservatives and libertarians all trace their roots. . . . Free government is different in *kind* from despotic regimes because its fundamental purpose—to vindicate the rights of individuals—is different.

His citation from a book published to continental indifference and his superbly decisive gloss are typical of Dionne's evidentiary resour-

ces and intellectual weight. His *Why Americans Hate Politics* was by leagues the political book of 1992, cited in news reports, editorials, and columns, and frequently by candidate Bill Clinton, who used Dionne's analysis of how both parties were dominated by ideology-besotted elites to argue for a “third way” of governing between alternatives he called “brain-dead.” Parenthetically, something that used to be encouraging about Clinton—his appetite for books—is less so now that he is First Reader and we can see his openness to ideas as an aspect of his unfinished political identity. At all events, *They Only Look Dead* deserves to be to 1996 what *Why Americans Hate Politics* was to 1992,

not only for its intrinsic qualities but also for the good news announced in its subtitle.

That news is good not just for “Progressives” but also for



that much larger group of Americans whom Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich has called "the anxious class"—the sinking middle class, whose real wages have been frozen or falling since the late 1970s. The anxious class elected Bill Clinton in 1992 and then, frustrated by what Dionne calls the "dysfunctional" Democrats, helped to make Arney, Gingrich & Co. the new congressional majority in 1994.

Whether the majority will hold is another question. As Dionne makes clear, the "radicalized conservatism" of the new Republicans has nothing to say to the anxious class except, Work harder and lobby for the return of child labor. The Arney-Gingrich view of virtually any act of government as incipient tyranny—FDR as Stalin, JFK as Mao—rules out help from Washington in making the transition to the new world economy. This leaves the social fate of the anxious class up to the market, which to the Republicans is the sphere of freedom, much as government is the sphere of coercion. But the market, specifically the new world economy and the technological revolution, created the anxious class in the first place. Thus, in the face of the country's overriding problem, the Republican Party is in principled bankruptcy.

That is why Dionne predicts a revival of progressivism—the faith of turn-of-the-century Progressives and their New Deal legatees in the ability of government to expand freedom (think of the GI Bill of Rights) by hindering the hindrances of birth or environment or historical moment which otherwise tend to restrict economic opportunity to the few. "By moving American conservatism toward a rendezvous with nineteenth century laissez-faire doctrines," Dionne writes, "Gingrich and his allies will force their opponents to grapple with the task of constructing the twenty-first-century alternatives to laissez-faire."

"Their opponents" means the Democrats, and Dionne devotes much of his book to the Democrats' still-ramifying failures of intellect, nerve, memory, and political imagination. In his first chapter, "Why Politicians Don't Get Respect Any more," he shrewdly suggests that the Democrats' fellow-traveling with the anti-government rhetoric of the 1970s and 1980s left them nothing to argue about with Republicans. The "politics of moral annihilation"—the attack ads, the scan-

dal-mongering, the personal vilification, that have driven public faith in politics and government to toxic depths—filled the philosophical void. Dionne rightly says that "the overall impact of the foul atmosphere . . . is [to favor] the anti-government right, because the most obvious target of the public's anger (as the Republicans demonstrated in 1994) is the government." Thus the Democrats, by leaving the field of principled argument to the Republicans and by failing to defend their progressive tradition ("their main reason for existence"), robbed that tradition of legitimacy and left uncontested the public impression that government is theft.

"In this climate," Dionne observes, "it's easier to convince voters that your opponent will hurt them than that you will somehow help them." This appears to be the Democrats' strategy in this year's congressional races: morph your opponent into a clone of the immensely unpopular Gingrich and engage in "Mediscare" over Republican "cuts" in Medicare. It is easier to go negative than to meet the new Republican Party in open debate over, for example, progressive alternatives to the Republican surrender of Medicare to for-profit HMOs and big insurance companies—a surrender that an American Academy of Actuaries study predicts could both drive up the cost of traditional Medicare and make doctors even more unwilling to treat Medicare patients.

DIONNE sees today's politicians as "adrift" in a sea of crises they are either unable to address (Republicans) or unwilling to address honestly (Democrats). "The Four Crises of American Politics" form the substance of Dionne's important second chapter. These are:

- The economic crisis made by the new world economy, which "seems to break the link between the success of the affluent and the well-being of everyone else"—notably the growing segment of the anxious class that lines up every morning in "the global hiring hall," in the words of the labor analyst Richard Rothstein, where wage levels are driven down by the desperate masses of the Third World.
- The political crisis created by the economic crisis. Voters still hold government responsible for the economy, but government has never had less control over what is no longer a national economy but is a world one. "For politicians in

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the democratic countries, this marriage of ever-higher levels of accountability with less actual power is a nightmare."

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• A crisis of purpose over America's post-Cold War role in the world, which was exposed in the debates over Clinton's interventions in Haiti and Bosnia.

Dionne skillfully links the first three crises, but his synthetic gifts desert him in his discussion of the fourth, which he treats mainly as an inside-the-Beltway dustup among elites, when more is at stake. Dionne, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, is too much a man of the Washington establishment to confront basic questions of national strategy in an era when both parties are pledged to balance the budget—questions like Why should U.S. taxpayers forgo social investments, as Dionne calls for in order to help solve the economic crisis created by the new world economy, so that we can defend Europe against... well, whom? His establishment world view creeps into his discussion of Clinton's foreign policy. Thus he says, "Toward Russia [Clinton] pursued a consistent policy of general sympathy for Boris Yeltsin and sought to avoid moves that might strengthen nationalist feeling in Russia." Though criticized as too soft on Yeltsin, "the policy did seem to prevent the worst from happening." The assumption is that Clinton's words were or could be causal as to events in Russia. That is the kind of pre-Copernican thinking that few still question in Washington and that has led to grand expectations about "the U.S. role in the world," which in turn have led to national hubris, disillusionment, and distraction. Even Bill Clinton, after defeating the "foreign-policy President" on a platform of domestic renewal, has fallen back on foreign policy to display strength. Why can't he display strength over raising American wages? One reason is the Washington foreign-policy establishment's grip on the engines of respectability and its monopoly on the vocabulary of seriousness.

IT was said in criticism of John Galsworthy that his *Forsyte Saga* was read by every Forsyte in England. Something comparable might be said of Dionne's account of the Clinton Administration. There is little in his emollient pages to de-

ter the First Reader from repeating his recent performance with Ben Wattenberg, whose book *Values Matter Most* was critical of Clinton, and telephoning Dionne full of praise and rueful agreement with what are less criticisms than extenuations. Dionne includes stimulating chapters on the elections of 1992 and 1994, on the ideological hardening of the post-1992 Republican Party, on the role the press has played in the political crisis, and on the cyber-Darwinian vision of Newt Gingrich, who beneath his Fourth Wave blather is truly a man of '96—1896, that is, to which year of untrammelled rapacity he wants to return the country, limiting the government's power in relation to transnational corporate interests to what it was before Lyndon Johnson, John Kennedy, Harry Truman, Franklin Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Theodore Roosevelt. But Dionne's appraisal of Clinton, because it is so smart and sensible and because Dionne's reputation precedes it, will have great currency among political journalists as they assess the Clinton record in the election campaign. For that reason it merits a critical look.

The context made him do it—such at bottom is Dionne's defense of Clinton. Reasonable, fair-minded, informed, and insightful, Dionne's case is hard to upend. Yet those who come to his book hoping that Dionne will express some of their disappointment in Clinton will be disappointed.

Administration spokespeople cite low unemployment, low interest rates, and the extremely low inflation rate that reflects flattened wages as evidence of the success of Clinton's economic policies. But, as Dionne points out, Clinton ran against Bush not just on the arithmetic of yesterday's politics but also on sinking wages and living standards. Dionne says that Clinton's inability to deliver in this harder coin—neither wages nor living standards have budged under his Administration—"arose in significant part because the problems were far more easily described than resolved." True. But, as we will see, he verges on being *too* fair to Clinton, who is only the most powerful man in the world.

Was Clinton unable to fund the robust worker-retraining programs advocated by Robert Reich in these pages in the 1980s? "It cannot be stressed enough how much the budget deficit he inherited from the Reagan-Bush years impeded his ability to

govern." Did Clinton as President lose the clarity of vision he displayed as a candidate about the country's big problems? "If Clinton often seemed indecisive, that was, in part, because almost any decision he made carried substantial political risks." Did Clinton succeed in his goal of rehabilitating "the welfare state" in the eyes of middle-class voters who favored a generous version of welfare reform as long as it vindicated work? "Clinton's approach to this problem was more complex than is usually allowed."

Since polls showed strong public support for universal coverage throughout the 1994 debate over health care, why didn't Clinton at least demand a vote on his program, which alone of the alternatives had universality at its heart? "It was a large irony: A program designed to reduce public mistrust of government fell victim to that very mistrust." And why were welfare reform and health-care reform and campaign-finance reform delayed until 1994, when the Republicans were in full wrecking mode, when Clinton had campaigned on these issues in 1992? "President Clinton had a hellish time winning enactment of his 1993 budget because Democrats were divided on both the fundamental issues it raised and the niggling particulars it involved."

By rejecting Paul Tsongas in the primaries, Democrats rejected his argument that the budget deficit was the country's major problem. By electing Bill Clinton, who ranked deficit reduction much lower in his campaign than either George Bush or Ross Perot, the general electorate seemed to agree. So why did Clinton spill all that costly blood in 1993 over a deficit-reduction budget? "Clinton's appointees . . . insisted that much of what had been said in the campaign had to go. . . ."

The context—the times, the inherent difficulties, the party divisions, the economic advisers—made him do it. But Clinton appointed the advisers. He tolerated the party divisions. He seemed paralyzed by the difficulties. He let the times shape him rather than trying to shape them. Specifically, he failed to pry Tom Foley and Richard Gephardt away from the ideologically suicidal reliance of the Democratic Congress on special-interest money to finance its empty "politics of incumbency." Instead of holding a Little Rock-style summit on health care, with experts testifying on TV about the pros

and cons involved in the several reform plans, Clinton let his wife prepare her justifiably complex plan behind closed doors, so that when finally made public it was an opaque lump. Because they had not been vetted in open discussion, the carefully calibrated tradeoffs looked arbitrary. Since the logic of health-care reform had not been explained, opponents did not have to couch their criticisms in terms of that logic. The policy-wonk culture of liberalism showed its fatal political witlessness. Clinton permitted welfare reform to slip off the agenda so as not to offend party liberals, whose help he needed to pass his health-care bill, which was delayed by Hillary Clinton's wonks. When he finally announced the health-care plan, the most sweeping social program since Social Security, he let "Harry and Louise" have the last word on the substance. Then, instead of taking the issue of "health care that's always there"—which directly addresses one of the main fears of the anxious class—to the country, he let the Republicans nationalize the midterm elections around their back-to-McKinley contract.

To put Clinton's failures as President into perspective, it helps to recall a distinction FDR made between "low politics" and "high politics." Clinton cannot get enough of low politics. He perfected "the permanent campaign" in his Arkansas years, and he is never more himself than when electioneering. Polls, focus groups, advisers, mercenary purveyors of spin (from James Carville to David Gergen to Dick Morris)—sometimes Clinton disappears behind the costly machinery of manipulation. But he has not really tried high politics in the FDR sense—politics as public education, as frank explanatory talk about the challenges facing the country. It is as if he has forgotten how he got to the White House: by talking, explaining, connecting the dots of public discontent into a plausible politics of remedy. To do this, of course, he would have to stand up as President for the Progressive faith in government as an agent of freedom and for an economics that, er, put people first. This would make Clinton enemies among the kind of people who go to his beloved Renaissance Weekends at Hilton Head. The engines of respectability would roar in protest. The bond market would signal its displeasure, and the soft-money contributions from Wall Street would dry up.

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the 1993 budget, Dionne writes of Clinton, "His largest achievements—free trade and deficit reduction—were, at bottom, conservative achievements. Yet they were conservative achievements that won him no political payoff among conservative constituencies." Had George Bush been re-elected, these would also have been his main achievements. Running against the vision-challenged Bob ("I feel my pain") Dole, Clinton seems at this writing likely to be re-elected. Will he run on Medicare, Newt, foreign policy, and promiscuous empathy, or will he recover the Progressive voice he sounded in 1992? Will wages, living standards, health care, welfare and political reform—the unfinished agenda of Clinton I—furnish the agenda of Clinton II? The danger for Americans of the anxious class is that Clinton will beat Dole with Dick Morris's "upscale strategy," detaching natural-fiber Republicans from their polyester brethren among the religious right, and then govern with one eye fixed on the dubious laurel of going into history as the President who balanced the budget in the term of his successor. That would kill Dionne's Progressive resurgence in its crib, and the fall of the middle class would continue unabated, driving American politics to a dangerous place. ☼

Vargas Llosa Returns to His Peaks

by Steven G. Kellman

DEATH IN THE ANDES

by Mario Vargas Llosa,
translated by Edith Grossman.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
271 pages, \$24.00.

IN Latin America, where Rubén Darío, Gabriela Mistral, Miguel Angel Asturias, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Alejo Carpentier, and Carlos Fuentes have served as diplomats, and where the poet Ernesto Cardenal was the Nicaraguan Minister of Culture under the Sandinistas,

a compelling metaphor is not always the limit of a writer's power. In 1990 Mario Vargas Llosa, the only contemporary Peruvian with an international literary reputation, ran for President of his country. He garnered a plurality of 29 percent in the first round of balloting but lost the runoff to an obscure agronomist named Alberto Fujimori, who received 57 percent of the final vote. In *A Fish in the Water*, the memoir that Vargas Llosa published in Spanish in 1993, he recalled the arguments with which Paz tried to dissuade him from entering politics: "incompatibility with intellectual work, loss of independence, being manipulated by professional politicians, and, in the long run, frustration and the feeling of years of one's life wasted." Nevertheless "the decadence, the impoverishment, the terrorism, and the multiple crises of Peruvian society," as Vargas Llosa explained it, drew him to the challenge of seeking "the most dangerous job in the world." The author of ten novels, including *The Green House* (1968), *Conversation in The Cathedral* (1975), *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1982), *The War of the End of the World* (1984), and *In Praise of the Stepmother* (1990), by running for President of his poor, embattled nation, pursued the grandiose illusion "of writing the great novel in real life."

Living now in London, Vargas Llosa is again trying to write the great novel through more conventional means. At the age of fifty he outlined a five-year plan for fresh projects that would include "a novel, something between a detective story and a fictional fantasy, about cataclysms, human sacrifices, and political crimes in a village in the Andes." *Death in the Andes* is that novel. Originally published in 1993 in Barcelona, as *Lituma en los Andes*, the new book is Vargas Llosa's first work of fiction since his political adventure. It is the work of a man who, even in exile from the nation that repudiated him and in retirement from the public life he grew to despise, is as obsessed with his native land as was James Joyce, who physically abandoned Ireland but wrote about nothing else. "It's a country nobody can understand," says Paul Stormsson, a Danish professor in the new novel, trying to explain his prolonged fascination with Peru. "And for people from clear, transparent countries like mine, nothing is more attractive than an indecipherable mystery."

DEATH in the Andes begins with a mystery: What happened to three men—a mute, an albino, and a construction foreman—who suddenly vanished from Naccos, a remote mining town in the Peruvian Andes? It concludes with an enigma: How slender is the boundary between civilization and tenebrous horror? The novel's indecipherable mystery is exquisitely attractive to the clear, transparent country that is a genial reader's mind.

The protagonist, Lituma, is a native of Piura, in the northern coastal plain; to him, alpine Naccos is a madhouse where he is the only sane inmate. A corporal in the Civil Guard, posted to Naccos—with only one subordinate—to protect 200 workers who are trying to build a highway, Lituma is determined to solve the disappearances. Were the missing men victims of Sendero Luminoso, or Shining Path—guerrillas who are ruthlessly bent on eradicating all traces of urban industrial capitalism? Or has some atavistic savagery surfaced, a reversion to the ritual sacrifices and cannibalism practiced by the region's early Chanca and Huanca cultures? In Lituma, Vargas Llosa (who spent some of his childhood in Piura, which, he recalls fondly in *A Fish in the Water*, "is more immediately real in what I have written than anywhere else in the world") offers a surrogate for himself and for the civilized reader. Through the exasperated corporal we confront a murky, mountainous universe unamenable to the rule of reason. In founding and leading Libertad, a civic movement designed to cleanse Peruvian politics of its venality and violence, Vargas Llosa presented himself as a champion of enlightenment in a sad, benighted land. He explains in his memoir,

Although I was born in Peru ("through an accident of geography," as the head of the Peruvian Army, General Nicolás de Bari Hermoza, put it, thinking that he was insulting me), my vocation is that of a cosmopolitan and an expatriate who has always detested nationalism, which strikes me as one of the human aberrations that has made the most blood flow.

In Vargas Llosa's account of his campaign for the presidency, the bloody, aberrant forces of fear, resentment, and obscurantism triumphed over urbane reason. *Death in the Andes* re-enacts that national and personal failure. The decent corporal, who represents authori-

ty, is isolated and helpless in Naccos.

The novel offers vivid demonstrations of why Peru, which the nineteenth-century naturalist Antonio Raimondi called "a beggar sitting on a bench made of gold," has become an international symbol of self-destruction. Like the Cambodian Khmer Rouge, Sendero Luminoso—before President Fujimori displayed its legendary leader, Abimael Guzmán, captive in a cage—was world-renowned for savagery in the service of ideological zeal. In *Death in the Andes* terrorists stone to death two young French tourists who gaze in awe at the Peruvian landscape and whose only crime is ignorance of Spanish. They also execute Hortensia D'Harcourt, an elderly naturalist who naively believes that someone whose life has been spent studying and protecting the country's environmental and cultural resources will be spared by fanatics. "Our concern is nature, the environment, the animals and plants," she informs her accusers. "We don't work for the government; we work for Peru. All of Peru." But, categorizing her as "the intellectual who serves bourgeois power and the ruling class," the terrorists are deaf to her appeals to common ideals or common humanity. When they murder her, they are as impassive as when they slaughter a herd of vicuñas.

However, *Death in the Andes* offers horrors even more harrowing than Shining Path. The *serruchos*—mountain people—believe that their rugged terrain is haunted by *apus*, tutelary spirits of the local summits who must periodically be propitiated with ritual slaughter and cannibalism. *Pishtacos*, demons who suck the fat out of living human bodies, are said to wander the mountainside. "In civilized places, nobody believes things like that anymore," Lituma says. But the corporal is not in Piura anymore, and many in Naccos believe that the *huayco*, the Andean avalanche that defeats the efforts to build a highway and nearly kills Lituma, has supernatural origins. Lituma interrogates Dionisio, the proprietor of the town's only cantina and the impresario of nightly Dionysian revelries. But neither he nor his wife, Adriana, a devotee of witchcraft, can satisfy a civilized man seeking a lucid explanation for the mysterious disappearances in Naccos.

Neither can the lonely corporal find sexual satisfaction. Lituma's only companion is his adjutant, Tomás Carreño, a young

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Civil Guardsman assigned to this forlorn post as penance for a violent infraction. Every night, as they prepare for sleep on their Spartan cots, Tomás recounts an installment of his own love story, and Vargas Llosa's text cuts deftly from the bleak stint in Naccos to a droll romantic fantasy of passion, murder, courage, and devotion. An Andean Scheherazade, Tomás keeps his listener awake long into the night with a tale that arouses Lituma's curiosity and his frustrated lust. Assigned to serve as a bodyguard to a gangster called Hog, Tomás killed Hog after he observed him bedding and beating a pretty prostitute. A twenty-three-year-old virgin, Tomás fell desperately in love with the prostitute, Mercedes Trelles, who was indifferent and even hostile to her presumed benefactor. In fact by murdering Hog, Tomás endangered them both. (The vanity of benefaction is something the lovestruck young bodyguard shares with his quixotic politician-author.) Tomás and Mercedes flee across Peru, and amid a series of outlandish escapades Tomás loses his virginity and \$4,000. When, at the end of the novel, the beautiful Mercedes materializes in Naccos, Vargas Llosa confounds two realms, along with the skeptical reader who would not credit the power of love.

IN the Andean fastness of Vargas Llosa's new book passion is as indecipherable a mystery as violence. Both defy and defeat the logical mind. One intoxicating evening Lituma listens to a couple of mining engineers tell chilling stories about the pre-Columbian peoples who inhabited Peru: "Sacrificing children, men, women to the river they were going to divert, the road they were going to open, the temple or fortress they were building—that's not what we call civilized." Corporal Lituma is a civilized man who has strayed into the heart of darkness, and the hypothesis of atavism seems the only rational response to the horror—the horror of humanity. "Two cultures, one Western and modern, the other aboriginal and archaic, badly coexist, separated from each other because of the exploitation and discrimination that the former exercises over the latter," Vargas Llosa wrote about *The Green House*. But he might just as well have been describing the figure in the carpet of his entire career, including his failed presidential bid.

Lituma meets a mining engineer who

wonders "if what's going on in Peru isn't a resurrection of all that buried violence. As if it had been hidden somewhere, and suddenly, for some reason, it all surfaced again." The traumas of a political campaign marked by irrationality, violence, and disappointment surface again in *Death in the Andes*. A vocal critic of President Fujimori, who subdued the terrorists but also arrogated to himself extra-constitutional powers, Vargas Llosa apparently considers it imprudent to return to Peru. Yet even after spurning him at the polls, Peruvians remain proud of their most famous novelist. A visitor to Lima is often taken to the affluent suburb of Barranco to gaze at the house that Vargas Llosa left behind. In *Death in the Andes* the author returns to his most successful medium, in an account of cosmic failure that explains why he abandoned politics but cannot leave home.

In a lecture on his own fiction, delivered at Syracuse University in 1988, Vargas Llosa identified *The War of the End of the World* as his favorite, "because I think

it is the most ambitious project I have ever undertaken." At a mere 271 pages, *Death in the Andes* lacks the heft of that 568-page tome, a complex account of a mid-1890s rebellion in the Bahia region of Brazil. But it is the author's most immediately and thoroughly engaging book since *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*. In his five-year plan for literary production Vargas Llosa outlined ideas for other Peruvian fictions: "a play about a little old Quixote-like man who, in the Lima of the 1950s, embarks on a crusade to save the city's colonial-era balconies threatened with demolition" and "a historical novel inspired by Flora Tristan, the Franco-Peruvian revolutionary, ideologist, and feminist, who lived in the first third of the nineteenth century." "I don't hate it! I don't hate it!" Faulkner's Quentin Compson, in remote Massachusetts, insists about his native South. A ghostly exercise in personal exorcism, *Death in the Andes* enables its exiled author to return to his natural calling and to the native landscapes of a fertile imagination. ☼

BRIEF REVIEWS



Paul Gauguin: A Complete Life

by David Sweetman.
Simon & Schuster, 600 pages,
\$34.50.

Mr. Sweetman points out that "the one thing about which Gauguin was fastidiously honest is his frequent claim that he wasn't." "I am," the painter wrote, "a savage from Peru. If I tell you that on my mother's side, I descend from a Borgia of Aragon, Viceroy of Peru, you will say it is not true. . . ." It was true, among much else that was not, and this is the sort of thing to keep both biographer and reader alert. It is Mr. Sweetman's intention to account for the development, the imagery, and the meaning of Gauguin's brilliant but enig-

matic paintings. There is the man with the white horse, the nude Tahitian beauty, the idol, the monster, the crouching mummy, the white cat—and the anonymous figures drifting or lurking in the background. These motifs appear in various combinations throughout the work Gauguin did during his two stays in Tahiti and his last, disease-ridden days in the Marquesas. Mr. Sweetman makes intelligent and plausible connections between the images and the painter's private and professional objectives. Gauguin yearned to make a large, preferably scandalous, splash in the Paris art world; he became enthusiastically involved in the post-Darwin, anti-industrial upsurge of unorthodox spiritual cults, including the Rosicrucians; and he developed his own concept of a universal faith

"of eternal renewal, of rebirth and continuity and, ultimately, of hope." The promise of "A Complete Life" can raise the specter of mindlessly assembled trivialities. There is no such danger in Mr. Sweetman's admirable book, in which everything contributes meaning to Gauguin's work and illuminates his strange, stubborn, disaster-ridden life.

The Battle for History: Re-fighting World War II

by John Keegan.
Vintage/Random House,
128 pages, \$10.00.

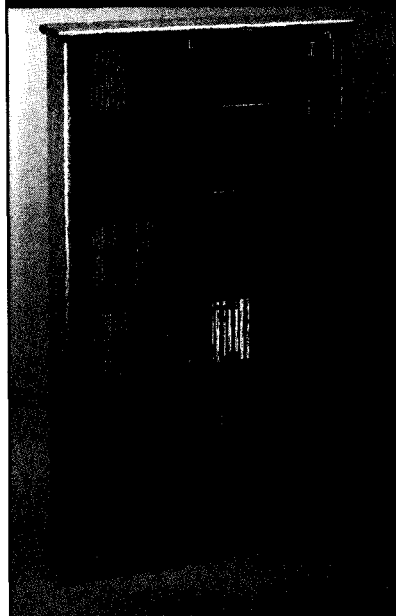
Mr. Keegan is a distinguished military historian, but this book is not a history of the Second World War. It is an explanation of why no inclusive history of that war has yet been written or perhaps ever will be, and what amounts to a reading list for anyone wishing to learn about the conflict from the best of the piecemeal accounts available. The text is brisk, lucid, dryly witty, and ideal for its intended purpose.

Rain of Iron and Ice

by John S. Lewis.
Addison-Wesley, 288 pages,
\$25.00.

Mr. Lewis is a codirector for science at the NASA/University of Arizona Space Engineering Research Center for Utilization of Local Planetary Resources and the commissioner of the Arizona State Space Commission. He knows a great deal about asteroids, meteorites, and meteors, and he takes the Earthbound reader on a dizzying tour of the routes these objects follow and the spots where some have collided with Earth. More than 200 impact sites have been located, although such study was long delayed by an intellectual elite dominated by "snotty ignoramus who have evidently never been outside at night." What has happened 200 times can happen again, and Mr. Lewis proposes plans for averting what could be a planetwide catastrophe. His text is not merely alarmist. He views asteroids as potentially beneficial. It is estimated that the smallest known metallic asteroid contains "over \$1,000 billion worth of cobalt, \$1,000 billion worth of nickel, \$800 billion worth of iron, and \$700 billion worth of platinum metals." Mr. Lewis envisions crushing this asteroid—its name is Amun—and bringing it to Earth "in tiny,

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A	T	O	M	E	N	B	I	P	I	N	T	O
M	I	L	A	N	T	E	L	E	T	H	O	N
B	O	D	C	T	O	N	E	R	S	E	L	E
A	S	P	H	A	L	T	S	A	C	R	E	D
D	E	S	E	U	J	S	O	P	H	I	S	M
A	L	T	E	R	E	D	N	A	I	T	R	O
P	R	I	S	M	S	T	I	P	S	I	E	R
T	H	G	E	A	S	I	E	R	T	F	M	O
H	O	M	E	G	A	M	E	I	X	I	O	N
U	N	A	R	M	N	E	L	K	T	A	T	I
G	E	S	T	A	T	E	S	A	Z	T	E	C

"Blankety-Blank"

Each blank represents a letter of the Greek alphabet; the appropriate letter appears in italics within or after its clue's solution note. Across. 1. LO(G)C(k) 5. UNPOLIS + H (upsilon anag.) 11. AT(O)M; *iota* 13. PI + N + TO; *pi* 14. MIL(e) + AN 15. TE(LETHO)N (hotel anag.) 17. TON(ER)S 19. ASPHALT (anag.); *alpha* 20. SA(CRE(W))D 23. SO(PH)S + M; *phi* 26. ALTE(RE(X))D (delta anag.) 28. PRI(S)M + S 31. TI(PS)DER; *psi* 33. EA(SIE)R 36. H(OMEGA) + M(E); *omega* 37. I + XI + ON; *xi* 38. UNARM (anag.); *mu* 39. (the)TA + TI; *theta* 40. GEST(ATE)S (eta rev.) 41. AZTE + C (zeta anag.) Down. 1. LAMB(A)DA; *lambda* 2. OTIOS + E (is too anag.) 3. GOL + D (rev.) 4. CENTAUR (hidden); *tau* 5. UN + TO (rev.); *nu* 6. PILES ON (anag.); *epsilon* 7. OPER + A (rev.) 8. INHERIT (anag.) 9. STOLE (double def.) 10. H + ONE 12. BE(N)T(a); *beta* 16. CHEESE (hidden) 18. S(CH)ST; *chi* 21. S(T)IGMA + S; *sigma* 22. JESSANT (anag.) 24. PAP(RI)KA (*kappa* anag.) 25. MORONIC (anag.); *omicron* 27. RE + MOTE 29. RHO + NE; *rho* 30. MAGMA (anag.); *gamma* 31. TIME (rev.) 32. THUG (tough anag. - o) 34. (f)EELS 35. FIAT (anag.)

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safe packages." He also assumes that should Amun or its like set a collision course for Earth, there will be ample time to deflect it—if not to collect that enticing bonanza. Mr. Lewis takes long views and makes them exciting.

Journey to the Land of the Flies & Other Travels

by Aldo Buzzi,
translated by Ann Goldstein.
Random House, 160 pages,
\$23.00.

Mr. Buzzi's travels are an idiosyncratic mixture in which real places and precise details are interlocked and superimposed upon one another so that one is rarely certain where the author actually is. His "facts" are sometimes debatable. If "cabbage-eater" is what the Russian is called in America," it must be in a restricted milieu. An Italian train ride somehow leads to reflections on James Joyce, who "took a route opposite to that of a normal writer: he began with a classic (*Dubliners*), continued with writings that became more and more complicated (*Portrait of the Artist, Ulysses*), and ended with a novel (*Finnegans Wake*) that is untranslatable and practically unreadable." Wherever he is and whatever his target, Mr. Buzzi is surprising.

Ambrose Bierce: Alone in Bad Company

by Roy Morris Jr.
Crown, 306 pages, \$30.00.

Ambrose Bierce (1842–1914?) wrote a review that should be posted in every publisher's office: "The covers of this book are too far apart." He also wrote an all-purpose inimical epitaph: "Here lies 'So-and-so'—as usual." He advised readers of his San Francisco newspaper column, "Don't believe without evidence. Treat things divine with marked respect—don't have anything to do with them. Do not trust humanity without collateral security. . . ." As a social or literary critic, he used an elephant gun indiscriminately on mice and dinosaurs. As a fiction writer, he began in the wake of Bret Harte and was later swamped by Mark Twain, but the best of his macabre tales, whether coldly ironic or comically bloody, retain a unique power to chill the reader. One critic stated that "death is Bierce's only subject."

There was reason for that preoccupation. Bierce enlisted in the Ninth Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment at the start of the Civil War and served at Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Chattanooga, and in numerous less famous but effectively murderous actions before his luck ran out, in 1864, at Kennesaw Mountain. He recovered from the head wound but not, Mr. Morris argues, from what he had seen—although it was more than twenty years before he turned war memories into fiction. Bierce was, by the way, a very good soldier who left the Army as an officer, and Mr. Morris, a Civil War historian, admirably describes the battles Bierce fought and the conditions he met. The author does well in reconstructing Bierce's subsequent life as an abrasive newspaperman whose up-and-down career left him, at age seventy-one, out of fashion and a job. He went off to Mexico, allegedly to view another civil war, and disappeared. Speculations about his fate have continued ever since. Mr. Morris disbelieves most of the theories about Bierce's death and despises some of them. His own theory is as unprovable as any, but it suits both Bierce's independent character and his penchant for creating annoyance. This is a fine biography of an eccentric who remains wickedly quotable.

The Demon-Haunted World

by Carl Sagan.
Random House, 480 pages,
\$25.95.

Professor Sagan's protest against superstition and the uncritical acceptance of pseudo-scientific claims may not be read by the audience he hopes to reach; they presumably enjoy reports of rape by Bigfoot. Even the already-converted skeptic, however, is likely to find novel points of interest in the author's analysis of flying saucers, alien abductions, and memories retrieved under hypnosis.

Acid

by Edward Falco.
University of Notre Dame, 248 pages,
\$25.00/\$14.95.

"The Artist," one of the stories in this collection, first appeared in the October, 1994, *Atlantic*.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams



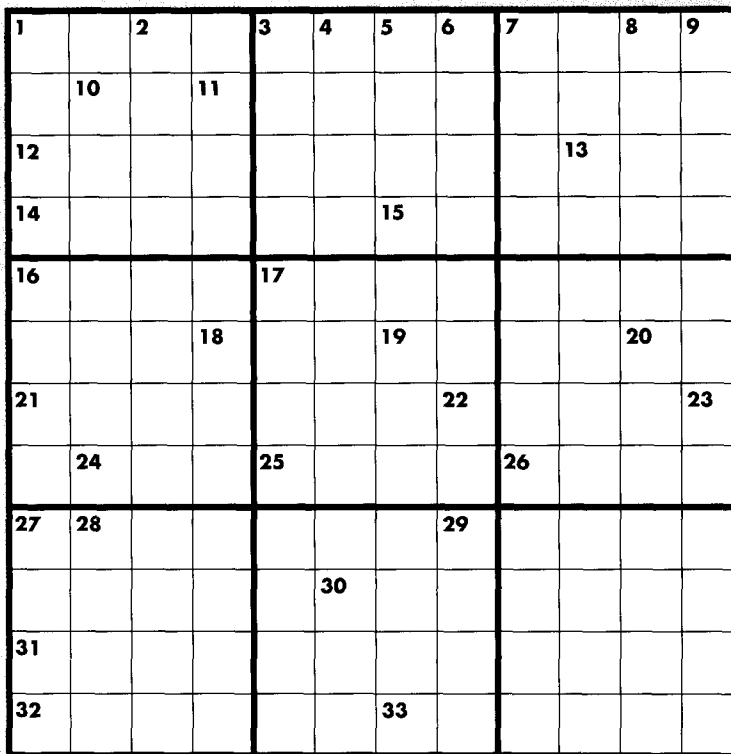
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Your Move

In this month's puzzle, clue answers are to be entered in the grid starting in the appropriately numbered squares, as usual; however, no indication is given of their lengths. The heavy bars, rather than showing where entries begin and end, serve to divide the grid into nine sections. Each of nine clue answers must drop one of its letters before entry in the diagram; one such letter is dropped from each of the nine sections. Taken together, these letters will explain your goal. The goal may be achieved, and the puzzle's final square filled, only if you make the right move. Clue answers include seven capitalized words.

The answers to last month's Puzzler appear on page 125.



Across

1. Accepting goal, go in
5. Old city illustrations in hot tub facility
11. Question changing audition daily
12. Children at the front imitate band's antics
14. Conflict is widespread on east side of street
15. Intelligence agency going back in to interfere with a West Indian island
16. Ocean vessel turned green
17. Navigational device is second in existence
19. Clothing a couple of NBA players in Sonic style?
21. Flowers coming after fourth of Whitman's Samplers
24. In six races, busted guts

26. Dope cache initially buried in hill
27. Hold up train and get going
29. Lush weaving found around king's looms
30. Volume about combat fortification
31. Sauna Dali designed in part of Spain
32. Cat eating a speechwriter's last source of speech
33. Attack with intensity, gaining a victory (*two words*)

Down

1. Counts strays in southwestern town
2. Close ranks at first, in atonement
3. Compulsion of uncle: getting into women's clothing
4. Place in New York for those dogs to be heard
6. Fastener next to a party decoration
7. A barrier placed by hill-dweller is unyielding
8. Start to take off burden by myself
9. *Chronicles of Narnia's* introduction going into metamorphosis of Aslan
10. Deposit one's coats
13. Engineer rising in morning, retiring at day's end
18. Revising prayers, make a new application?
19. Black goo on former President's hat
20. At hearing, subdue someone bopping a person on the head?
21. Paving path, Al's unorthodox
22. In trouble, had sent back flower
23. Slide on snow, wearing damp garment
25. Fifty entering revamped Coney Island in the East, once
28. Raced a common genus of frogs

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

I have always understood the verb include to refer to a number of items that make up a portion of a larger whole, as in "The alphabet contains twenty-six letters, including A, B, and Z." I constantly hear and read it used in a contrary sense, as designating a complete listing of the items that make up a whole, as in "The alphabet contains twenty-six letters, including A through Z." This drives me crazy. Am I fighting a losing battle? Can I include you in my list of allies?

Ian Burrow
Hopewell, N.J.

I'm with you. And yet we mustn't carry this too far: "His friends *include* some absolute lunatics, and some perfectly nice people, too," for example, is not incorrect, nor does it necessarily imply that the fellow has still other friends, who don't fall into either category. The word can be legitimately used in a way that leaves what is or isn't *included* a bit vague.

Here's a question that has been bothering me for several years: What is the name of the next decade? The aughts? The zeds? Why hasn't this issue been resolved by the popular media? What was the first decade of the 1900s called?

Wes Howard-Brook
Seattle, Wash.

Historians and linguistic scholars have an assortment of opinions about what the first decade of the present century was called: it went by the *nineteen hundreds*, the *aughty-aughts*, or simply the *new decade* and other non-names, various personages have assured me. *The twenty hundreds*? *The aughty-aughts*? Those

precedents don't help us now. Many new coinages have been put forward over the past decade or so, among them *the zilches*, *the uh-ohs*, *the naughties*, and *the pre-teens*. The three proposals that people seem inclined to take seriously, though, are *the ohs*, *the double Os*, (pronounced "ohs"), and *the aughts*.

Certain arms of the media have been trying to resolve the issue: *The New York Times*, for example, has to date published two editorials in favor of *the ohs*. But this isn't something that can be resolved by any given authority. English is wonderfully democratic: words and phrases enter the standard vocabulary because large numbers of people like them and find them useful. In this case we may well fail to settle on one choice, and a hundred years from now historians and linguistic scholars will have an assortment of opinions about what we called the first decade of the new millennium. Maybe precedent is telling us something after all.

My grandmother used to illustrate the difference between will and shall with the following two sentences: "I shall drown; no one will save me" and "I will drown; no one shall save me." One sentence denotes intention; the other denotes desperation. But which is which?

Stephanie Oddleifson
Natick, Mass.

You're not the only one who's confused by *shall* and *will*. A few months ago, attempting to hammer out a budget bill, Senator Bob Dole and Senator Tom Daschle were at a loss for

the proper wording. "Holding a dictionary between them and pouring [sic] through its pages," *The New York Times* report-

ed, "the two leaders agreed that the words were synonymous. They agreed on *shall*."

I wish they'd called me. The traditional distinction made in England is that in the first person *will* has to do with willpower—that is, it denotes intentionality—and *shall* with simple futurity, whereas the second and third persons reverse the pattern. Thus your two sentences mean, respectively, "I am going to drown, and no

one is going to save me" and "I mean to drown, and no one had better save me." (In fact, the latter of your sentences is the punch line of an antique joke about a Scotsman whom well-brought-up English folk mistakenly al-

lowed to drown, because—well, you get the idea.)

There are, however, many traditional exceptions to the traditional rule, and even the Fowler brothers—admirable watchdogs of traditional English English—were forced to admit, in their *The King's English* (1906), that the idiomatic use of the two words, "while it comes by nature to southern Englishmen, . . . is so complicated that those who are not to the manner born can hardly acquire it."

In the United States today, most authorities agree, *will* does the better part of the jobs that it once took the two words to do, and what *will* doesn't do is generally taken care of in other ways, such as by *is going to* or the cleverly vague 'll. Except in set phrases like "*Shall* we dance?" and "*We shall* overcome," *shall* now strikes most Americans as an affectation. When you're in doubt, therefore, use *will*. Bob Dole and Tom Daschle notwithstanding, it's the all-American choice.

Have you recently had a language dispute that you would like this column to resolve? Write to Word Court in care of *The Atlantic Monthly*, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116, or send E-mail to MsGrammar@TheAtlantic.com.



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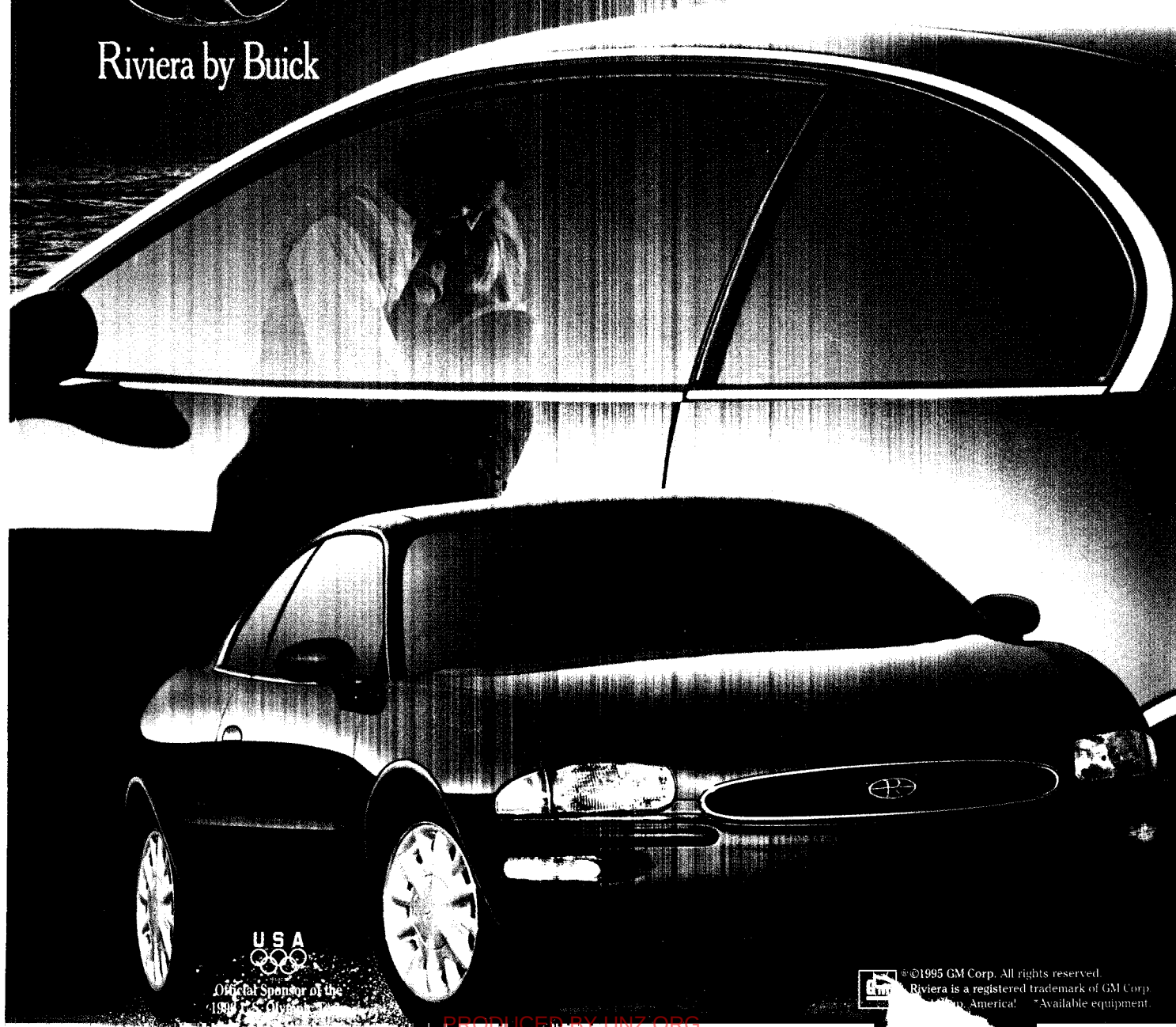
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